



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07602530 7

# One Mocking Bird's Breed

*by*  
JENNIE McMILLAN

ROBERT J. SHORES, Publisher

column 1



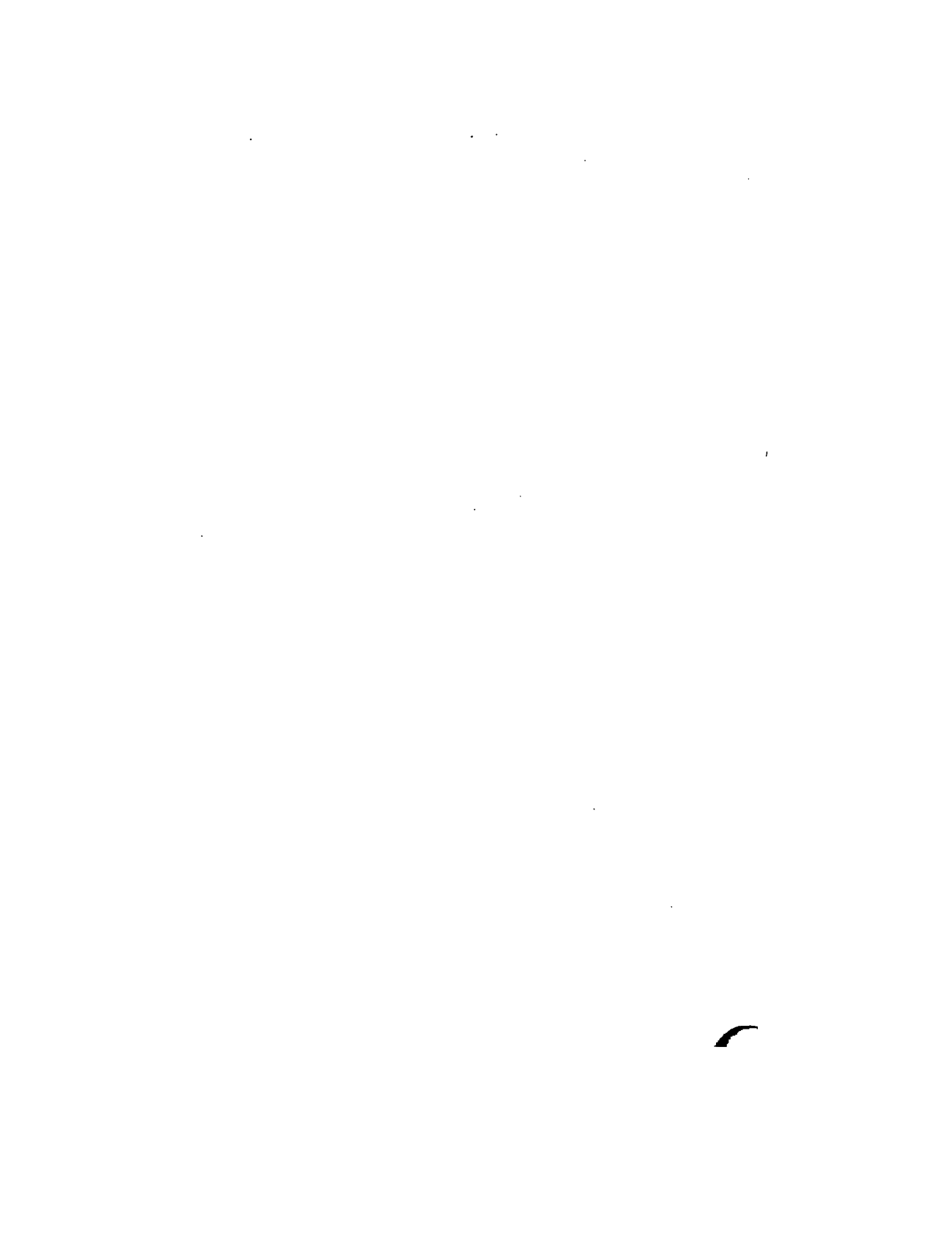
2000

1000

100

101

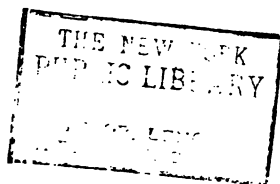
102





## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**







# THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

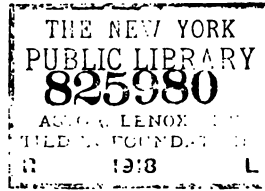
By

JENNIE Mc MILLAN



NEW YORK  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

NEW YORK  
ROBERT J. SHORES  
PUBLISHER  
[c 1904]



Copyright, 1918  
By ROBERT J. SHORES

NOT FOR  
CIRCULATION  
1918

**To**  
**the memory of my brothers**  
**Harry Campbell McMillan**  
**and**  
**Archie Harrison McMillan**  
**this book is affectionately dedicated**



## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**



# The Mocking Bird's Breed

## PROLOGUE

1858—that was the year. And it was about five o'clock of a spring's morning that Archie Morven, teacher of the Cherokee Mission located among the Georgia mountains near Yellow Gold, came out of his cabin and closed the door behind him. He was tall, handsome, athletic, and he sprang from the rickety porch into the little trail that zigzagged down the steep flank of the mountain with the grace of one used to nature's craggy ways. The sun tossed its first morning smile earthward, warming dew-chilled violets, sweet-shrubs, honeysuckles. Frightened little birds with dried grasses in their bills flew up from a growth of chinquapin as he passed. An ambitious young fox trotted across the trail in a first venture from its nearby home of massive oak.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

When Morven at last reached the little schoolhouse, which sat upon a ledge of rock about halfway down the mountain, he paused on the outside to listen to the river as it gurgled along its rocky bed in the bottom of the chasm. Somehow, he liked to start the day's work with that soothing sound in his ears. He went to the very edge of the cliff and gazed down at the frothing waters for a long time; then drew himself away, went inside the building, threw open the glazeless shutters, and seated himself at his desk to write a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, who was also a close personal friend:

"Hon. George Young, Commissioner Indian Affairs,

My dear sir and friend:—

According to the rules of the department, I am sending you a report of the school under my charge:

In my last letter to you I believe I men-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

tioned the fact that I had had no trouble in disciplining my scholars, which statement was true at the time of writing. But something tragic has happened since then—the old chief's halfbreed granddaughter has entered our ranks, and life has been a burden to me ever since, for, on account of her white father's desertion of her mother, who died of grief soon afterward, this girl has all her life nurtured an intense hatred of white people and she shows this very plainly towards me, being very impertinent at times. And unless she is curbed, I have grave fears she will demoralize my whole school.

But in spite of her snaggy disposition she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld, the unusual creaminess of her complexion showing up so prettily against the blue-black of her long braided hair. And her eyes! If they be true soul-windows, then her soul is not so fiery as her actions would indicate; for her eyes are all that is soft and gentle. Even

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

in her impassioned moments they never lose their softness, nor her voice its mellow. One would recognize her to be a princess were he not informed of the fact.

They call her Coonee Latee (Mocking Bird). And you would not wonder they gave her a bird's name if you could hear her sing. The first time I heard the music of her song in the forest outside my hut, I held my breath from the thrill of it, for I had never heard anything like it before in all my life. Even the birds of the air swooped on lower branches to listen, for her higher notes had the sound of their own spring calls, her lower the sound of the river gurgling in the chasm. Her music was so contagious that I took it up in a whistle that must have reached her ears, for suddenly she bounded up to my window, laughing softly:

'What funny noise you make! It sound lak' the hum of a sting-laded insect.'

'Perhaps I am an insect,' I warned, 'and

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

unless you are careful you are likely to feel my sting.'

Her laughter rippled a trifle higher.

'Mocking birds not fear insects,' she gave back; 'They eat them.'

Now, my friend, please don't think I am too interested in this little Indian, and do not censure me for taking up too much of your time with her, but the cold fact is that her case is more serious than you think. I feel she will yet be the cause of serious trouble between her people and myself. It may mean my very life. For, you see, most all the Indian youths of the school are in love with her and she therefore wields a strong influence over them. Being the chief's spoiled darling, she rules everywhere else in the nation and seems determined to take the rod out of my hand here.

But enough of her—I have another matter for your attention:

Lateward, there has been much uneasiness among the Indians, and I attribute it to the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

fact that there has been talk of the legislature's passing a bill requiring them to remove to a land and soil beyond the Mississippi. They are opposed to this, on account of their gold lands, for of course you know that gold was discovered in this region in the year twenty-nine. Jades Bane, a gap-toothed white renegade, is doing his utmost to incite the Indians against the whites by telling them the white people are forcing them out of the state merely to get their gold. I understand the man's motive in this. He is madly in love with the young princess and is seeking the chief's favor by talking against his own people. Bane told me that Coonee Latee reminded him of a South American girl he had once loved, that to him she did not resemble an Indian in any degree. That caused me to laugh, for she is about as fiery a little savage as one would wish to meet. Her light-colored skin is about all that's due to her father—the rest of her is Indian. But even

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

if she is a savage, she is superior to Bane, and I am determined that that lily-livered coward shall keep away from her. I do not trust him, and, strange to say, in spite of his unpleasing features he seems to attract women. Perhaps it is his money, for he appears to have enough of that. Again hoping you will be pleased with the report I am enclosing with this letter and that I shall hear from you soon, I am

Your friend and servant,  
Archie Morven."

Morven sealed the letter and settled himself back in his chair to await the arrival of his scholars. In a little while they came in, some laughing, some talking, and seated themselves at their desks. Though most of them were Indians, there were a few white scholars among them, children of the settlers who had already come into the land of Cherokee.

Morven saw at a glance that the princess

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

was not present this morning and he heaved a deep sigh of relief, but this feeling of peace did not last long, for, scarcely had the spelling lesson begun when she danced in humming a strangely sweet tune.

He frowned fiercely.

"Miss Mocking Bird (he always called her that), I have asked you to enter the class room in a quiet manner!"

A low-toned giggle escaped her. He eyed her severely for a moment; then turned once again to the spelling lesson.

Now, one of the white scholars, Pamelie Hank, was a very handsome girl, and though there was no sentiment between her and Morven, he often walked home from school with her and sometimes took dinner at her house. For some unknown reason the little princess took a violent dislike to Pamelie and one day when she met her on the trail with Morven, she edged up alongside of her and gave her such an unmerciful pinch on the arm that poor

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Pamelie cried out in pain. Morven was furious.

"You little savage!" he cried, throwing Coonee Latee a terrible glance. "You blood-thirsty little savage!"

But long before he had finished the sentence she was off in the forest singing as if nothing had happened.

"I believe she loves you and is jealous," suggested Pamelie, eyeing him closely.

"Hardly," he replied. "Love would make her at least respectful." Hot blood had come into his face.

"Don't you think she is pretty?" pried Pamelie.

"Beautiful!" he breathed softly, dreamily.

Then Pamelie, who was in love with another man, smiled. And they walked on in silence up the trail, shadows of swaying foliage playing upon their thoughtful faces.

The next day the princess was so unruly in

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

school that Morven was forced to send for the chief. But when the old man heard the teacher's complaint, he only smiled and threw a glance towards the whip hanging on the wall.

"You must conquer her," he said.

Morven was a trifle embarrassed.

"But I seem not to be able to do that."

Then the chief, who was anxious for his beloved granddaughter to reach a state of civilization through the medium of Morven's school, said very sternly:

"There's only one way to keep a leetle Indian girl from troubling you—whip her."

"But—" began Morven.

The chief broke in:

"I know it sounds not easy to you, but you will soon learn how different leetle Indian girls are from white. My Coonee Latee's head is as hard as the chateo (stone), and her deesposition is like the oko-mulgi (turbulent waters)

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

of the river below. The falls in the chasm are as a placid lake compared with her."

Before he left, the chief told Morven of his fear of having to quit the Georgia mountains for that hateful new land beyond the big river. He said he knew the white people only wanted the gold. When Morven heard this, he thought instantly of Jades Bane.

"The government does not intend to rob your people," he assured. "It will pay you for the land."

The chief drew up.

"But it will not pay gold land prices," he said in a deep voice. "It is out of your power to deceive me. Your people want our taulawenca (yellow gold), hence this sudden determination to get rid of us."

Morven was quiet for a few moments, then:

"Where is this wonderful gold mine of yours?"

For a moment the chief's agitation was so violent that he could not speak, and when he

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

did at last find his voice, he said angrily:

"No sick-faced son of a milk-livered people will ever know where our gold mine is located. Even when you have driven us from our rightful home to that bosky swamp across the river, you will search for our treasure in vain. It is our Cherokee secret and always will be!"

Then he turned on his heels and walked majestically from the building. And long after he was gone, Morven pondered over his words. They had had a true ring to them and Morven hoped, in case the government did see fit to dispossess the Cherokees, it would pay them a fair price for their land, for he fully believed the land to be full of gold, as the princess wore a string of nuggets worth a good-sized village, and no princess of the old country ever wore gowns of more exquisite weftage. Even her moccasins were adorned with beads of pure gold. Yes, the Cherokees of Blue Ridge Georgia deserved a huge consideration for their land!

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

The days wore into weeks, the weeks into months, and at last Morven was about to congratulate himself that the princess was under his control, but it is well he did not, for that very day she suddenly broke out afresh, and over nothing. She had just flown into a rage, when he reproved her for reading aloud, and pulled his hair, crying as she did so:

"Oh, what a woman you are, with your curly hair!"

There was something so magnetic about her impulsiveness that Morven was inclined to laugh at her, but the boys roared so boisterously in approval of her impertinence that he commanded her to apologize, which she refused to do. Then he forced her to remain after school, and when they were alone, he said:

"Aren't you ashamed to worry the very life out of the man who is striving to help you to become civilized?"

Her beautiful eyes opened wide.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Civilized!" she gasped. "Oh, you doan know how beautiful that word sounds to little savage lak me." Her laugh sounded like the tinkle of rain drops down the walls of the chasm.

His big bronzed hand caught her slender one and held it firmly. "You must apologize," he repeated in a steady voice.

She drew a shivering breath, reached up and pulled at his hair again.

"I merely called you a woman," she mocked. "Surely you would not have me call you out of your name."

She wriggled free of him and spun over to the door. He caught her just as she was about to open it. His face was white with anger, but hers was still defiant, her eyes glowing like forest fires.

"Woman!" she repeated in her strange low voice. It was the greatest insult an Indian could fling at a fellow being, and she enjoyed the pain it caused him. "Woman!"

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Miss Mocking Bird!" he warned. "Be careful!" His mouth was drawn like the iron bands of a cotton bale.

She pushed him away. "You are weak and womanish," she repeated. "The youngest boy in your school could whip you." She dashed to the window and called out to a man whose figure was outlined against the streak of blue that circled the crest of the ridge:

"William Iron Arm, come in here and teach this pale-faced son of knowledge a lesson in muscles."

Without a second's wait, William Iron Arm, the youngest, though perhaps the bulkiest boy of the school, came in and hurled himself against Morven, throwing him on the floor. But the school teacher rose quickly from his sprawling position and returned the Indian's compliment with a weighty left upper cut which sent the bulky one to the floor. And now the Indian rose and renewed the attack with all the wild-beast strength of his savage

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

nature. It was only after a battle of many rounds that Morven succeeded in driving him sore and limping into the forest. Then, with blood dripping freely from his face the teacher turned and faced the girl who was still regarding him with mocking eyes.

"If you have any more admirers you would have treated in a like manner, call them in," he said in a jerky voice, wiping the blood from his face, as he watched the retreat of the limping one.

Though a strange new feeling of respect was creeping over her and her very heart sorrowed for him as she saw the blood flowing so freely from his face, she hid it in her answer—not for all the gold of Cherokee would she let this man know how her heart was beating, throbbing, suffocating her. So she merely tossed him a withering glance and said in a low little voice:

"I still say you are a woman."

Suddenly his eyes caught the whip on the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

wall. He recalled her grandfather's advice, and reached up. She watched him, her brows lifting into a straight line.

"I hate you—hate you!" she barely breathed. Her anger was low-voiced.

His was pitched high, to a white heat. He raised the whip, but hesitated with it poised above his head. He could not strike her! All the man within him forbade it. His hand fell to his side, and he was about to step away from her when he saw the look of contempt on her face—she despised him for his weakness. Suddenly it poured over him that she was just a peppery-tempered little savage who needed taming and needed it badly. Once again the whip went up, and now she shrank from the blow that she felt sure was coming at last. This frightened little movement of hers brought him to his senses, and he threw the weapon down with a terrible noise. Why should he stoop to a savage's way of controlling a woman? He would conquer her a white

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

man's way or not at all. He drew her to him in a sudden desperate movement, crushed her against his heart, kissed her burning lips, her face, her neck.

She struggled fiercely to free herself, but his grip was firm, hard—it hurt.

"I'll control you a white man's way or not at all," he repeated hoarsely.

"I hate you," she strangled under his lips.

"Maybe you will love me after this," he smiled. "Maybe you will care enough to behave yourself."

A frightened look came into her eyes, but it soon passed and the fire was there again. She was the princess of a great nation, and no man must feel his power over her. So she smothered the glow in her heart, and said with great calm:

"If you keep me here until midnight, I shall still say I hate you!"

He looked down suddenly and caught a strange look in her eyes. Magnetized by that

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

glance, awed, almost afraid of what he saw, he drew back from her with a quick movement, and released his hold on her. She straightened herself, smiled a little, and said loftily:

"If my Big Chief is finished with his cowardly punishment of me, I should lak' to go, as I have an engagement to canoe the rapids with Jades Bane."

His eyes narrowed.

"Why this sudden notion to call me your chief?" he asked.

She laughed, and threw back her head so that the heavy plaits swung backward over her shoulders.

"Because you have conquered me," she said with much irony, springing away from him and out of the door.

He went over to the window and stood watching her as she ran along the trail which led to the Indian village across the ridge. He frowned, for he was thinking of Jades Bane.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

What could even an Indian girl see to tolerate, much less to admire, in such a man as he?

The princess stopped to pick a honeysuckle and pin it in her hair. She must have felt her teacher's eyes upon her, for suddenly she looked in his direction, and as their eyes met, she wheeled quickly and sped on up the mountain, soon disappearing in the deep woodshadows.

The following day she behaved beautifully in school. In fact from the day of her unusual punishment, she was a changed being, the turbulent in her giving way to a serenity that was alarming. But though she did not bother her teacher by day, she kept him awake many nights worrying, wondering if she did not really hate him for the mean advantage he had taken of her. It had been unfair of him to treat her as he had — unfair and extremely rude.

One day she came back to the schoolhouse,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

after school was dismissed, for the string of nuggets she had left in her desk, and Morven, who was looking over some papers, approached her with congratulations for her recent improved behavior. She shrugged her shoulders,

"Oh, it ees a case of have to be good, for I would rather be beaten with a stick than controlled your—your—white man's way."

His face changed color.

"I am very sorry it was so distasteful to you," he said coolly.

She tossed him a look.

"You need fear no more trouble from me," she said with an air of finality. "I'll give you no excuse to repeat your hateful, hateful punishment."

Before Morven could say anything else, Jades Bane appeared in the doorway, dark and silent. The girl joined him without another word to her teacher, who watched after her with heavy eyes.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

At the end of the summer, the legislature passed the bill requiring the Indians to remove to the land across the big river. They were preparing to go. The white settlers, fearing trouble, had long since gone to the southern part of the state. Only Jades Bane, the renegade, and Morven, remained. Morven's school had been closed for many weeks, and he could not account for his wishing to stay in the mountains at such a time, unless it was the lure of the scenery that held him. Of course, he knew what was keeping Bane—Bane could not hide his love for the princess from anyone, now. Morven shrank from the thought. He could not tolerate the idea of Bane's ever confessing his love to Coonee Latee—she was too good to even breathe the same air with such a man, though Morven was forced to admit that she encouraged him. Could it be that she loved him? The school master's heart grew heavier, ever heavier.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Time skidded along, and it was nearing the day for the Cherokees to quit Georgia. And Morven had not seen the princess for so long that his heart was hungerbit for a sight of her. For days he had listened in vain for her song in the forest, and he wondered what was keeping her so strangely silent. Perhaps she was grieving over the move her people were about to make, perhaps she was reluctant to leave Bane.

Even while Morven was thinking all this, the noise of a low, guttural chant struck on his ears. It sounded as if all the women of Cherokee were bewailing the loss of their land. Their voices groaned like the wind crying through the chasm on a winter's night. Their sobs had the splashing sound of falling water.

Morven could not resist the temptation to find out what was the cause of all this sorrow, so he followed the sound until he came within a hundred yards of where the Indians were gathered on a cliff — a craggy nature altar

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

overlooking the deepest part of the ravine. They appeared to be in the midst of a sacred ceremony, and Morven climbed to the top of a tall pine to watch what was going on.

The women stood in a circle around a glowing fire, a basket filled with white balls was being passed to them by the old chief himself, and, as each woman in turn drew a ball from the lot, the shadow on the chief's face deepened. Instinctively Morven felt that the one who drew the odd ball would have to face some tragic fate. And when it came Coonee Latee's turn to put her little hands in the basket, Morven's heart seemed to stand still in his breast. He closed his eyes. When he opened them again, the princess was holding a red ball in her hand, and the chief had staggered backward into the arms of a young brave! The chanting suddenly ceased and a solemn quiet fell over the group.

Upon his perch ahigh the tree, Morven clutched at his heart to ease its pain; for all of

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

a sudden he seemed to realize just how tragically much he loved the princess. It was all he could do to keep from falling out the tree.

And the princess! She only smiled and caressed her grandfather affectionately, apparently not bothering much about her approaching destiny. Her eyes were aglow with a wonderful light, as she broke into one of her wildest songs, which struck straight to the heart of the man sitting in the tree some distance away. He thrilled and thrilled with the beauty of her music, which grew fuller and fuller until the whole mountain rang with it. Morven's every nerve tingled with pleasure at the wild, sweet sound.

Finally her singing stopped and the other women began their chant again, each kneeling at the princess' feet and kissing the hem of her gown. The girl smiled sweetly down on them, though the smile on her lips faded to an ashy gray as Jades Bane came forward from where he had been hiding behind a cluster

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

of chinquepin bushes and offered her his hand. She shrank from him. Horror filled her eyes. She held out her hand in a pitiful little gesture to the chief, as if she were asking him for relief. The chief drew Bane aside and spoke to him in whispered tones. Then Bane sauntered off towards the woods once again, but there was a pleased smile on his ugly mouth.

All of a sudden it dawned on Morven that Bane and the princess were about to be married. Why had he not thought of it before? Miserably heartsick and weak at the thought, he got down from the tree and dragged along the damp, soggy trail to his little cabin home, where he soon retired to a sleepless couch. Long into the night he lay there thinking, thinking. And the more he thought the more miserable he became, the more restless. Oh, why had he stood idly by and let a beast of a man like Bane snatch this beautiful, queenly girl from him? He could not reconcile himself to thinking of her as that man's wife—

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

it was too repulsive, too awful. Of course he felt sure Bane had bought her from her grandfather—it was his money. Surely the girl did not love him, for she had looked so hopeless, so wretched a while ago when Bane had tried to approach her.

The clock on the shelf struck ten, eleven, twelve, and still no rest came to him. After a while it struck one, and then in another second something else struck. This time it was someone knocking at his door. He made no motion to answer at first, but it soon came again, louder. Impatiently, wondering who could be disturbing him at this hour of night, he rose, drew his blanket around him, and opened the door.

There stood Coonee Latee!

Her eyes were swollen from crying, her hair was falling loosely around her shoulders, her dress was torn open at the neck, exposing her throat and bosom. She looked more beautiful than ever in her anguished, dishevelled state,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

more alluring. She ran up to Morven, caught hold of his shoulder and looked up into his eyes beseechingly:

"Please save me from Jades Bane!"

Morven looked surprised. The girl drew in a deep breath and proceeded:

"My people are going to leave me behind to guard their gold, and, in order to remain after the White Father says for me to go, I must wed with a white man." The words came in little gasps.

Morven still could not speak, but his eyes questioned her. She went on:

"And Jades Bane is the only—only white man who has offered to wed me." Her voice trembled, and now her eyes were away from him.

Morven's face went white, scarlet, white again.

"And you don't wish to marry Bane?" he breathed.

Pain flashed over her countenance.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"I doan care for him—I hate him!" she said warmly.

He stepped back from her.

"But you have always said you hated me, too," he reminded her.

The color deepened in her cheeks, and she stood looking down at her moccasined feet in silence. He too was silent for a long time, then finally said, "I don't quite understand."

She looked up quickly.

"Oh, can't you see?" she begged. "I want you to take me, and when I have received the grant for the land, you can be free of me again. It is the only way. And I would not be your wife for always."

She was on the verge of tears. He bit his lips. Then he said again:

"You—said you hated me."

She smiled a little then and her voice was tremulous when she spoke.

"Oh, that was to keep you from knowing

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

that you really had conquered me your—white man's way."

He caught her to him, opened his blanket to press her against his very heart. And she trembled from the sheer happiness of it all when she felt his lips once again on hers—the hot touch of them seared through her very soul. It was many moments before he loosened his hold on her and said:

"But you acted as if you were in love with Bane."

She flung a glowing look upward.

"That too was to keep you from guessing the truth."

Then he drew her to him again, and she sighed peacefully, sweetly—the mocking bird had found its shelter under the wing of its loved one.

They were married the next day—just before the Indians quitted Blue Ridge Georgia for that strange, far-away land across the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Mississippi, and when the brave old chief bade his beloved granddaughter farewell, he fastened a beautiful buckskin band around her head. It was a wonderful ornament, with glass beads wrought into a design of pink flowers trailing a white background.

"It is the secret of Cherokee," he trembled.

It was after he was gone that she took it off and examined it carefully. On the lining was the tracing of a mountain, at the foot of which stood a lean, stiff-legged animal—the artist's conception of a fox. Halfway up the east front of the mountain was a star.

"Halfway up Fox Mountain," she murmured to herself, tying it back on her head. "Maybe Coonee Latee draw Fox Mountain in the White Father's land lotteries; maybe she not."

But not even her husband was to share her secret—he did not ask. He just closed his arms around her grief-stricken little figure and held her firmly to his heart. And though she

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

felt secure in the protection of the man she had chosen to be her Big Chief through life, it was a terrible moment for her, standing there in the deep quiet that fell over the mountains after the Indians were gone. It was awful to think that the forests would never again ring with the sound of voices she loved. They were all gone now—William Iron Arm, Charlie Silly Thunder, Mary Looking Glass and dear little Sun Rise. They were gone to that strange, barren land across the big river. Barren! She did not know that the White Father was sending them to the very richest spot he possessed. Neither did the White Father know it. All she knew was that she was lonely already for her beloved people. A deep sob flowed up from her heart, a sob that the wind took up and carried on and on through the plumey-topped pines. Morven tightened his hold on her. Poor Mocking Bird!

## CHAPTER I

A girl drove four cows along the newly-made highway, which hung on the upper flank of the high, blue-topped mountain ridge, the pick marks still fresh and shiny in the perpendicular clay wall to the left, the dirt still red and grassless for many yards down the steep chasm to the right. The road wound in and out, following the line of the ridge, and there were times when it appeared to come to an abrupt ending — the turns were so sudden. And though it was smooth and level and hard-surfaced, it was extremely narrow, and little niches had been cut back into the clay every hundred yards, to allow for the passing of teams.

The girl walked dangerously near the edge of the road, though she kept her eyes on the ground to avoid the tragedy of a misstep which

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

undoubtedly would have landed her in the river that roared and gushed along the bottom of the chasm. A touch of color had come into her snow-white face, causing it to blend with the pink and white muslin dress she wore; a certain dignity hung about her which did not at all harmonize with the cragginess of her surroundings. For though she was fresh and pretty as the wild magnolia whose dew-laden cheeks were being dried by the rosy, rising sun, she seemed altogether out of place driving cows. Every once in a while she would wave the long cane in her hand at one of the cows who persisted in getting out of line with the others.

"Daisy, Dollie, Delia and Dot," she called in a soft, musical voice, "keep to the inner road, girls."

Slowly, as if they indeed understood her voice, the cows moved nearer the bank with that graceful swinging motion peculiar to cows that inhabit mountainous countries.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

The cows were on their way to the dipping vat three miles away, for their semi-monthly plunge. A new law required the people of the district to have their cattle dipped twice a month or else be prosecuted for not doing so, a law that was especially hard on the women living in the southern part of the county. And though Ben Morven, the man who had been most influential in having the vat law established, had promised to help the women round up their cows and drive them in, he had not kept his promise and that was why every woman down in the southern part of the county hated his very name.

Mrs. Smith, the woman who owned the cows now on their way to the vat, had not hesitated to write him her burning opinion of him, but he had only singed her hair with glowing embers by not answering.

However, the woman driving the cows was not Mrs. Smith. She was Bevill Brown, a full-fledged city girl, who had come to the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

mountain to spend a month in Mrs. Smith's big, comfortable log home, to escape the social duties of which a pretty, wealthy and consequently very popular girl sometimes tires. She had become so weary of the empty life she was leading, that she had eagerly consented to her guardian's plan of hiding herself away in the backwoods for a rest. And Mrs. Smith, who was accustomed to having one or two people from the city in her home every summer, had asked no questions. She merely concluded that the girl's tired, wornout look was due to overwork, and therefore determined to help the poor child regain her strength. And motherless Bevill had responded to the woman's kindness as a dew-chilled little violet responds to the warmth of the sun. That was why she was driving the cows this morning. Mrs. Smith's daughter Becky was ill and could not do so, and Bevill had bravely offered to go in her place. She had started at daybreak and had already covered a mile of the journey.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Suddenly the honking of an automobile horn from behind startled her, to say nothing of the cows, and she made a desperate effort to drive the poor frightened animals into the nearest niche, though the continued honking confused her so that she had a hard time doing so. However, she finally succeeded in getting them to safety; then she stood in front of them, her breath coming fast, the rose color swishing through her cheeks. As the fussy little car passed, its driver shoved his shaggy-browed face out and called to her in a gruff voice:

"Don't you know it's ag'in the law to drive cows on this part of the highway?"

Her color deepened, but she did not answer—just urged the cows to continue their way, and they had not gone another hundred yards when a second horn's harsh note struck on her ear, and this time the cows sought the shelter of another dug-out without waiting to be

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

driven. This second driver was even more impatient than the first.

"Don't you know you are breaking the law to drive cows on this new highway, Becky Smith? You can be prosecuted for this."

He had evidently recognized the Smith cows, though not their driver. Bevill bit her lips nervously and patted Daisy cow's broad dirt-covered face. She thought the more she saw of fidgety drivers the more she liked patient cows, but she did not speak.

The man muttered something to himself and drove on, the girl's pretty face shadowing under the fierce look he gave her. She wondered why most men were so impatient, anyway. Then, her own patience got a severe jolt when another horn warned her to get out of the way. By this time she was so upset that she hardly realized what she was doing and made no move to yield an inch.

Honk-honk!

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Still she paid no attention to the car that dogged her every step.

Honk! Honk!

The poor girl seemed relieved to hear that this horn had a more agreeable tone than its predecessors.

Tinkle! Tinkle! The cow bells had a noise of their own.

At last the man in the car grew impatient.

"Don't you know you are violating the law?" he called to her.

Like his horn's, his voice was pleasanter than those others.

"Don't you know—," he started again, but now she turned around and faced him.

"Yes, I know," she trembled, "but I really can't say that I have much respect for your laws, if this vat-dripping law is a sample."

The man caught his breath; then sat staring at the girl, and as he stared, his heart beat fast as the engine in his car, sending the blood through his veins at a speed that defied the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

speed laws of nature. Great mountains! What a beauty she was, about the prettiest specimen of wild flower his nature-loving eyes had ever beheld.

And she in turn studied him. He was young, handsome, well-dressed — altogether different from those other men who had gone on ahead of him.

"The vat law seems unreasonable to me," she faltered.

"But it is the only way to keep our cattle in a clean, healthy condition," he explained. "And our county is noted for having the healthiest cattle in the entire state."

"Oh, it's all right for the people living near the vat," she admitted, "but it is hard on the others. I should like to meet that man, Morven. He must be very selfish." The softness and sweetness of her voice robbed the statement of any unpleasant effect.

He smiled into her serious eyes for a moment, then asked if she were Becky Smith. A sudden

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

dash of mischief made her tell him she was, and he was about to tell her his name, when another car pulled up behind them.

"Don't you know—" began this last man, looking shrapnel, bayonets, swords.

Bevill could not resist a smile. "I ought to by this time," she broke in.

The man grunted impatiently. Then, as Bevill caught the strange, quizzical expression of the man in the first car, she blushed. And this first man steered his car into a niche, got out and drove the cows into another; then turned to the girl, as the other car passed on down the road: "Wont you let me drive you to the vat?"

She laughed tremulously. He went on:

"Get in my car; we can drive very slowly behind the cows."

He was so earnest, so boyish, so altogether welcome after her encounter with those other men, that she turned to the warmth of his friendship like a winter-beaten little bird turns

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

to the glow of a Florida sun. So she got in the car and sat down beside him, and they drove on down the road behind the cows, now swinging into the broader part of the highway.

"This new law is rather hard on some of the people," he said thoughtfully.

She sighed.

"Extremely hard," she admitted. "That man Morven must be a very selfish human not to have thought of anybody's comfort but his own."

He winced.

"Morven did not select the location for the vat," he told her. "Besides, he has only one cow."

She turned to him. "Do you know him?" she asked.

"Quite well," he answered. "His intentions are good, I believe."

A cluster of laurel flowers attracted her.

"Aren't they lovely?" she cried, pointing to them.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Yes; but they fade before your loveliness as stars before the moon."

Then her loveliness took on a red that vied with the color of his tie.

"Your simile is sparkling even if it has been used since the days of Ossian," she said in a low little voice.

He eyed her keenly.

"There are not many similies Ossian did not use," he returned. "He cornered the market on them, I believe, though some of the ones he used had been used by Homer before him, which only goes to prove that all great lovers of nature and beauty have much the same thoughts."

"I see that you are a lover of poetry," she said, with a little catch in her voice.

"Yes; because I love the lovely things poets usually talk about," he replied, throwing a meaning glance at her pretty face. "I love flowers and trees and—pretty women."

A peculiar little fluttering was in her heart.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

She looked away from him. He was silent for a long time. They were going very slowly now, for the cows stopped at every bunch of grass, and when there was no grass they just stopped, anyway. And when they did finally come to a fresh green patch of it growing along the banks of a cool little stream, they decided that this was indeed the place to eat their luncheon, and no amount of persuasion could get them to leave it. So Bevill and her companion followed their lead and prepared to enjoy the repast Mrs. Smith had provided. They got out of the car and followed the stream until they came to a cool spring of water which seeped from between two large rocks.

"You have not always lived in the mountains, have you?" the man asked.

"Not always," she replied, her eyes on the sandwich in her hand. She dared not trust herself to look at him.

"I thought so," he said. "I surely would

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

have met you before this, had you lived here continuously."

"And you?" she queried, now looking straight at him. "Have you lived here very long?"

"All my life save the four years I spent at Heidelberg."

She looked surprised. "And after having traveled so far, you are content to bury yourself in this country?"

He laughed. "Have I not told you that I love nature, besides, one is not altogether buried in a country that has such a splendid highway to connect it with the city."

"I don't think much of your highway," she said, thinking of her recent unpleasant experience. "It is too narrow."

His eyes met hers. "I adore it," he breathed, in a low, serious voice. "And from today I shall worship cows."

She rose suddenly.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"I—I—think we had better be on our way," she said.

He followed her to the car and they were soon on their way again, the cows moving along slowly in front of them.

"You don't expect to return to your home tonight?" he finally asked.

"No; Mrs. Smith—Mother—isn't expecting me back. I am to spend the night with Halleluah Givings, who lives on Morven's place, I believe. She and her husband are tenants of his."

"May I call by in the morning and take you home?" he offered eagerly.

"No, Jim Givings is to drive the cows back for me, and I shall go on later with Halleluah—she's to spend tomorrow night at our home."

He looked disappointed, and after this they drove along in silence. When they at last drew up in front of the Givings' place, Bevil got out, thanked him very sweetly for the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

service he had rendered her, the color spreading along her face as he caught her hand and held it firmly.

"This has been the happiest day of my life," he said solemnly, "and I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again very soon."

"I shall be in the mountains until September," she told him, sweeping him a lovely, lingering glance; then running up to the porch, where Halleluiah Givings, a pale-pretty, serious-looking young woman sat waiting for her.

"Well, well," drawled Halleluiah, her face smiling in its wreath of heavy golden hair, as she looked down the road after the automobile that was fast disappearing, "so Ben Morven did decide to help the women round up their cows, after all!"

Bevill looked puzzled. Then Halleluiah hastened to explain:

"That was Ben Morven that driv ye over, Miss Bevill. Didn't youn's know hit?"

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

The city girl colored deeply.

"Are you sure, Halleluiah?"

"Yes'm; quite sure. I'm his tenant, you know—me and Jim."

Then it occurred to Bevill that he had not told her his name!

## CHAPTER II

Picturesque, low and rambling, shadowed by dusky pines, Morven's home sprawled on the side of Fox Mountain, overlooking the broad, fertile valley below where acres and acres of corn, planted by Morven's tenants, swayed in the evening breeze, which was always cool in that part of the mountains. Farther down the valley to the right was a cluster of small houses, known as Yellow Gold, the county seat, a village of not more than three hundred souls.

When Morven at last reached home, he drove his car into the garage at the back of the house, then walked around to the front door which was opened for him by Mrs. Crill, his faithful friend and housekeeper. Her face broke into a smile as she glimpsed the young

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

man whom she almost idolized; for she too was a lover of nature, and to her, Ben Morven's splendid form and handsome face, his whole being, was one of nature's most perfect pieces of work. But Mrs. Crill looked at him with eyes blinded by a love of many years' standing, for she had known him since that day twenty-five years ago, when he had come down from the mountain fastness farther up the state, a ragged little orphan of six, and asked for shelter in Bud Neal's home, where she, a penniless young widow, was working for her daily bread. And when Mrs. Neal had asked him where he came from, he had looked her full in the eyes and drawled in a weak, hungry-sounding voice, as he pointed back to where the mountains shouldered each other against the dark gray sky:

"I came from up ther' wher' the mountains is steep, and wher' nobody lived but jest me an' Pa an' the birds an deers."

And when Bud Neal had asked him where

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

his father was, his eyes had grown larger than ever, his voice had quivered:

"Oh, Pa's back ther' wher' I came from." Then he had glanced down at the bag in his hand and gone on: "Pa gave me this and tole me to follow the creek until I got to wher' folks lived; then he got still an' cold like the deers he used to kill, an' wouldn't say nothin' else to me. I tried to make him, but he wouldn't. I waited all day for him to say somethin' else; then I got lonely an' cold an' went to sleep. He wouldn't talk the next morning; so I thought I'd better do what he tole me to do, and so I followed the creek, jest took it fer my guide till I got to folks."

Mrs. Crill had opened the bag and found it contained a few clothes, some books, and a piece of Indian bead-work—a pink and white head ornament, such as a Cherokee princess might have worn.

"What's your name?" Bud Neal had asked.

"Ben Morven," was the weak little answer.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Good stars! No wonder yer dad lived in sich isolation—he's the man what killed Punk Smith!"

It was then that Mrs. Crill had caught the little fellow in her arms and hugged him closely to her.

"Yo' ought not told him that, Bud Neal," she cried. "Hit'll stay with him through life, besides, I reckon ef ever a man was mean enough to be killed, Punk Smith was. And the law'd a sot Morven free ef he'd only stayed on fer his trial, for my man was a witness to the whole thing an' he said Morven shot in self defense. I'll swear to hit on a stack of Bibles as high as Fox Mountain, ef you want me to. My man would have sworn to hit in court ef Morven had been caught."

Ben Morven had never forgotten the comfort he felt in her that day—the comfort of knowing he had at least one friend to guide him through the shadow days that were upon him. And when success had come to him after

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

years of hard work and study, he had spent the first of his savings for a home for her, the next for a course of study at Heidelberg, and had later returned to the mountains where the very people who had once paid him such small sums for plowing their land, now gave him goodly amounts for his legal services. And though he was not a pedant, he enjoyed the position he now held among them — he liked to have them come to him for advice, these people who had forced him to work so hard for his daily bread. It was a satisfaction to know they looked upon him as their leader, had already made him mayor of their little town, and were even now talking of sending him to the senate. However, he loved them, these people of his. They loved him. That is, the people of his immediate vicinity loved him; for, like all men of importance, he had his enemies, and they were the Smith contingent that lived in the southern part of the county—the brothers; sisters, uncles, aunts of

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

the man his father had killed. Nothing he had ever done had pleased that tribe, and he was not surprised now that they were making such a row about the dipping vat. He had expected it. But what did surprise him was Becky Smith. In his most visionary moments he had never dreamed Mrs. Punk Smith's daughter was like that!

When he and Mrs. Crill sat down to supper, which was served by a neat-looking negro girl, he turned to her and said:

"I met Becky Smith on my way home and helped her drive the cows."

Mrs. Crill's good, motherly face showed surprise.

"Not Mrs. Punk Smith's girl, Becky?"

He nodded and smiled, as he thought of the pretty girl he had helped out of her trouble. Mrs. Crill regarded him thoughtfully.

"Where's Becky Smith spending the night?"

"At the Givings'."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

They sipped their tea in silence. Then in a little while Mrs. Crill broke in abruptly:

"I forgot to tell you that Lemme Bane was here a while afore you came in. He said he'd be back after supper."

He looked puzzled. Bane was one of the most turbulent spirits that lived among the Smiths, and Morven could not conceive what Bane could be wanting with him. He did not have to worry long, for, shortly after supper Bane, a leopard type of a man, came in without waiting to be invited, went over to where Morven was sitting, and snarled:

"Well, what are you goin' to do about it?"

Morven looked up sharply.

"About what?"

"About Ma's cow that ain't give a plegged drop of milk since she was dipped in that poison solution you interduced into this county."

Morven's brows went up.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"I don't think the dipping could have stopped her milk."

Bane's fists drew into a hard knot.

"You don't want to think it, d—n you."

Morven got to his feet and glanced calmly towards the door.

"Unless you can approach me as a gentleman, Bane, I don't care to discuss the matter with you."

Bane's keen eyes squinted under the other man's sudden searching gaze.

"Hit's time a plenty to talk like a gentleman when you've found the gentleman to talk to," he sneered. "You ain't nothin but the crawlin' leader of a gang of politicians that'd impose any law on the people for a little graft."

Morven's face was white now, as white as the kaolin that lay in little crevices along the mountainside. He went to the door and opened it.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Get out before I choke the life out of you!" he commanded in a quivering voice.

Bane growled, showing gapped teeth.

"I'll git when I'm good an' ready, you son of a murderer—"

Morven's fingers on his throat stopped any further utterance.

"Don't you dare!"

Bane squirmed away from him.

"I got a right to say hit, when your father made a orphan of the girl I'm going to marry, by his crime."

Morven staggered backward, a strange expression on his face.

"Whom are you going to marry?" he asked quickly.

"Becky Smith."

"I don't believe it!"

Bane laughed unpleasantly. "Who cares whether you believe it or not. But it's true, nevertheless. Our engagement was made

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

public in the county sheet last week."

Morven still was unconvinced.

"A man like you could never get within calling distance of a girl like Becky Smith," he said.

Bane drew himself up, strutted across the room and back, displaying a new, but too closely fitting suit, a stiff felt hat whose broad brim only served to enhance the sharpness of his features.

"Huh, and tut tut!" he smirked. "You don't seem to know me. When hit comes to women, I reckon I'm about the rip-snortest hell-lifter in this county. I won Becky Smith without halfway trying."

His gapped-toothed grin was an inheritance from his grandfather—he was Jades Bane's grandson. He walked over the threshold to the porch, throwing an evil glance back:

"I'll give you jest one week to pay Ma fer the damage yo' done her cow!" he threatened  
"Jest one week."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Then he disappeared in the dark, and Morven returned to Mrs. Crill who was sitting at the table clasping and unclasping her hands, a pale, worried look on her face.

"Do you believe he's telling the truth about Becky Smith?" Morven asked her.

She hesitated. Instinctively she felt that her answer would pain him. He spoke again:

"Do you believe that man's engaged to—to —Miss Smith?"

"Yes," came the reluctant answer, "I saw the announcement in the county paper last week."

For the first time in his life a deep, hopeless fear filled him. He could hardly account for it. He got up and dragged himself into his room and closed the door. Then he fell on the bed, groaning from the pain in his heart. For the first time in his life he was lonely for a younger companion than Mrs. Crill. For the first time since that day his father had refused to answer him, he was sorrow-stricken.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

The sweet face of Bevill Brown danced before him, mocking it seemed, and he clenched his hands.

For hours and hours he lay there going over every look, every word that had passed between them that day. Not a sound interrupted his thoughts; only the faint working of the watch in his pocket keeping time to his quickened pulse. The more he thought, the more puzzled he became, for he had not realized until now just how quickly a man's heart can become involved. Of course he did not suspect that the girl of his thoughts was any other than the real Becky Smith, daughter of the man his father had slain. He accounted for her friendliness by the fact that he had not told her his name. Surely, surely she would not have been so pleasant had she known who he was!

### CHAPTER III

A week later found Bevill still thinking of the day she had driven the cows to the vat, the day she would always remember as the happiest in her life. She liked to think of it—that day with its wonderful highway, and still more wonderful man. How his magnetic personality stayed with her. But she frowned at the thought that she, who had sought the quiet of Mrs. Smith's home to escape men, was actually worrying about one—worrying, wondering when she would see him again. It was a mystery to her—why he had let a whole week pass without making some effort to be with her. His indifference was at least something new in her life.

She did not guess his real reason for keeping away from her; for she did not know that Becky Smith was engaged to the evil-looking

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Lemme Bane who came to the house so often. Had she known this, she might have seen how unlikely it was that a man like Morven would intrude on a girl who had announced her engagement to another—for had she not told him she was Becky Smith?

She noticed how often Bane tried to stir up hatred against Morven by continually harping on the evils of the vat law. What was his object, she wondered. One night she overheard a conversation he was having with Mrs. Smith.

"I went straight to that smart Morven and axed him his excuse for not settling with Ma for the damage he done her cow," he was saying.

It was the mention of Morven's name that made Beville listen to the dialogue that followed. Her book of poems dropped to the floor unheeded as she drank in every word.

"And what'd Morven say to you?" asked Mrs. Smith.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Nothin'—merely cast me out the door, and that mighty quick," returned Bane sulkily. "But I wasn't surprised. Hit's the way that some folks, what's got more learnin' than others, acts towards a man that's axin fer his just an' lawful rights."

"Did he hurt you?" asked simple, trusting little Becky.

"Not much," he owned.

Mrs. Smith shrugged her broad, fat shoulders and looked up from her darning.

"Strikes me hit was about time fer your ma's cow to go dry, Lemme Bane. You can't lay that on Ben Morven."

Bane wriggled. He felt very strongly that his prospective mother-in-law did not like him, and he was always rather uncomfortable in her presence.

"I didn't think you'd take up fer Morven," he said, finally. "It don't exactly become you to be generous to a man whose very name

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

stands fer all the trouble that's come into yer life."

Her eyes snapped over her glasses.

"No matter what's happened in the past, Ben Morven's the biggest man in this county today, and you know it. It's a shame the way folks down this way pull a'gin him all the time. He's doing all he can to help us, too."

He grinned.

"How about them letters you writ him last week?" he reminded her.

The red trickled over her face.

"You agged me on to doing it," she admitted. "And I don't reckon I'm the onliest one you've spurred into writing him; you've a powerful strong influence over the folks down this part of the county, Lemme Bane, an' you've done all in yer power to stir up strife against a man that ain't ever really harmed you. The truth is, my cows air a thousand times better off fer the dippings they've got, and so's everybody else's, I reckon,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

if the truth was known. Cleanliness is next to godliness, an' I reckon it's a mighty good law that aims to keep animals clean. There can't be no harm in it, even if the vat is far away."

Bane laughed again.

"Yes, I heard some of the cows has been so much benefitted that they're giving ginger ale from some of ther' udders an' corn liquor from the others."

"If that was true, you'd be down in some widow's dairy yard now, helping her milk," fired Mrs. Smith.

Becky giggled.

"Don't be silly," warned the girl's mother.

After that night, Bevill, who had heard every word, liked Mrs. Smith more than ever, though she wondered what Mr. Morven had done to cause that good woman so much sorrow. How had he wronged her? That was the question which sung in her mind for many

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

days. She could not get rid of it. How had Ben Morven, the handsome, mysterious knight of the highway, ever harmed anybody, much less kind Mrs. Smith? Bevill had heard Bane refer to the matter more than once, and he was not the only one—other men who sometimes called at the house mentioned it. And the queer part of it was: these men were an easy-going set who never appeared riled until Morven's name was brought up; then they would spew and sputter like an overheated coffee percolater. Bevill frowned. What could it all mean, anyway? The worried lines deepened.

She was still thinking of it when late the next afternoon, with that sweet, childish abandon peculiar to her, she took her favorite book of poems and went for a walk along a little footway which finally brought her to a ledge of rock that overlooked the very part of the highway where she had encountered Morven that eventful day.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

She stood there for a moment enjoying the splendid stretch of scenery before her — the river which broke into a white-foamed waterfall as it gushed along its way in the bottom of the chasm; the mountain ridge beyond which was blue and dusky against the peaceful sky. As she drank in the wonderful beauty of it all, a long-drawn sigh escaped her, and she dropped down on a large rock and opened her book. It was her love for poetry that made her contented to be alone in the mountains, that made her enjoy the primitiveness of Mrs. Smith's home; for her heart was as full of poetry and goodness as the mountains were full of flowers and fresh air.

She ran her fingers listlessly through the pages. Somehow, she could not become interested in her book today. She would glance down at it; then across the chasm to the mountain peaks and begin to think of the man she had met on the highway. He was the poem that filled her soul for the moment. As she

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

thought of him, a lovely, quivering smile played along her mouth. She looked longingly down at the little niche which had been her refuge from the fidgety cars that day, and while she looked, her heart began to beat furiously—Ben Morven was driving along the highway towards her! He steered his car into the dug-out below and sat gazing across the chasm, a strange, dreamy expression in his eyes. The top of the machine was thrown back so that Bevill could watch the memory-shadows playing over his face. How handsome he was! His hat was in the bottom of the car, and the breeze was playing havoc with his thick wavy hair. Above, the girl's heart stirred uneasily. Below, the man's was so full of something big and wonderful that he seemed not to be able to hold it within; for he was murmuring half-aloud, not guessing she was near:

“Bevill! Darling! Why did you flitter into

## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**

my life that day only to leave me with this awful pain in my heart?"

She caught her breath sharply, wondering where he had learned her name. He went on, as if it relieved him to say it:

"Why did you tell me you were Becky Smith, when you knew it would keep me away from you?"

She pressed "Love Lyrics" against her heart to keep him from hearing its awful beating. Then she picked a wild flower and pitched it over the cliff. It fell in his lap, and he looked up suddenly and saw her for the first time. Remembering his recent outburst, he colored profusely.

She saw his embarrassment and made a brave little effort to help him:

"Come on up — it's lovely up here," she invited sweetly.

He reached her side in a few seconds, and she made room for him to sit beside her.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Did—you—hear?" he faltered in a low voice.

She smiled and looked out across the chasm. Then she asked him how he had found out her name.

"Halleluiahs Givings told me," he answered.

"I forgot to warn her," she sighed.

His eyebrows went up. "Why did you wish to conceal your identity from me?" he asked coolly.

"I had no real reason," she replied. "And besides, I thought surely you would come to see me and then I would have told you the truth."

His face brightened then, but hers shadowed.

"Why were you opposed to calling on Becky?"

He started to tell her everything, the whole story of his father's fatal affray with Punk Smith, but something within him made him hold back. He never knew exactly what it was. Somehow he could not tell her of it then,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

of all that trouble. The dying day was too full of soft breezes and happiness to mar it with dark shadow-pasts. No; he could not tell her of it then. And what a pity! A whole world of suffering would have been spared them if he had only spoken. Instead, he merely said:

"Mrs. Smith is angry about the vat, and Becky is engaged to marry Lemme Bane. Of course I could not be attentive to an engaged girl."

She seemed surprised.

"You don't mean that Becky is going to marry that man?" Horror filled her eyes.

"Yes; didn't you know about it?"

She shook her head and was silent for a few seconds. Then she merely said:

"I don't think Bane is good enough for Becky."

He smiled. "That's what I think," he said,

They were silent for a long time, the roar of the water-falls coming to them. Her eyes

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

were looking far away, and he studied her face, trying to read her thoughts, and when she did at last turn to him, she saw something in his gaze that sent the blood flurrying through her face. When he glimpsed her blushes, he quoted:

“ ‘If my looks have brought roses to your cheeks, why forbid my gathering them—the law permits the sower to reap the harvest, you know.’ ”

His voice was low, like the song of the river, and he had caught her hand while speaking. She tried to draw away from him, but he held her firmly; for he had read something in her eyes that gave him courage. Her soft, fluffy hair was close to his face. He breathed the perfume of it. He laid his cheek against it, and now his heart was battering itself against his side. Once again she tried to draw away from him, but he seemed not to notice her effort. He just drew her closer, with a desperate movement, bent over and—gathered the roses.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Five, six of them he gathered from her glowing cheeks; then laid his lips on her trembling ones. She was as helpless in the torrent of his passion as a leaf in the water-fall below—she was too frail a being to hold out against its great velocity, and just lay there, motionless. After a while her strength returned to her and she pushed him away from her with a sudden great force, and walked down to the edge of the cliff. He reached her side instantly.

"Forgive me!" he begged in a low, wretched voice.

She did not answer. And they stood there in a long, deep silence, the gloomsome gloaming falling around them.

"Won't you forgive me?" he still pleaded. his eyes troubled.

She sensed the agony in his voice and smiled a wan little smile of forgiveness. Then they stood watching the falling shadows. Hers was a woman's fight against an awakening love. His was a man's against a terrible despair;

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

for now he felt sure she did not love him, her manner spoke it all too plainly. He sighed softly to himself, and the shadows fell deeper ever deeper. Then after a while the stars came out!

She sat in her window long that night watching the moonlit peaks, breathing the pungent, piny air, listening to the roaring falls in the distant chasm. She was thinking of him—the man whose kiss was still burning her soul. Her face paled with horror. What was this terrible uneasiness that had at last taken possession of her? Oh, what was it? But even as she asked herself the question, the answer was in her heart—love. It was a terrible admission for her to make, she who had fought so long, and heretofore so successfully, against the slavery of love. But even in all its terror, there was a certain comfort in the remembrance of his kiss. She drew in a long, peaceful

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

breath of mountain air, then went over to her bed to dream.

And Morven? He was so wretched when he reached home that night that Mrs. Crill was quick to notice it. Instinctively she felt that his worry was on account of the city girl, and she was afraid because she knew city girls were not in the habit of marrying mountain men. She frowned. It would kill her if any sorrow should come into the life of her Bennie Boy, for he was not the kind to get over a love affair any too soon—this man who had followed the creek down from the higher mountains. He took life more seriously than other men, just threw his whole soul into everything he undertook, and it would be that way if he should fall in love—it would be eternal with him.

He saw the trouble in her eyes. He caught her in his arms.

"I am going to take Miss Bevill Brown to

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

the Fiddling Contest tomorrow," he said, "and I want you to go along with us."

She smiled up at him. "I'm sorry, but I promised Halleluiah Givings I'd go with her an' Jim." Then she added in a low, troubled voice: "You'd better be careful of city girls, my boy, you'd better be careful."

He smiled sadly. "I know what you are thinking," he said. "You are thinking that city girls only lead mountain men on to loving them for the pleasure of casting the poor, foolish mortals aside. But this city girl is different. She shows very plainly from the beginning that she does not entertain the slightest sentiment for me, and I—well, I have sense enough not to hope."

Then he kissed Mrs. Crill goodnight and retired to his room, the good woman watching after him with a peculiar expression on her face.

"Ef you wants to find a passel of men that

## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**

Cupid can't enslave, you'll have to search that old Indian mound over in Nacoochee," she muttered, shaking her head.

## CHAPTER IV

"What do youn's reckon has happened?" asked Mrs. Blufton of a number of women who had already gathered on the benches in front of the rudely-constructed platform, which stood in the shadow of a high, pine-topped mountain, to await the beginning of the All-Day-Fiddling Contest. "Old Bill Hanks gal, Pamelie, came back to the community last night and Bill shot the door smack to in her face."

The speaker was a tall, bare-boned creature, with an over-dried-fodder skin and eyes the color of the jade green frock she wore. All her life she had been looked upon as a leader in the county, having been blessed with a very domineering disposition. At first her listeners showed some little surprise at her statement, but they remained stolidly silent, their eyes

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

wandering down to the creek where the men folk had gone to water their teams. But finally Mrs. Blufton cleared her throat sharply, and then one of the women, feeling she was expected to say something, drawled out:

"Well, I don't know but as Bill done right in closin' his home ag'in her, beings as how she went off to the city with Lemme Bane without so much as axin' the preacher's consent."

Then another woman asked, with a touch of pathos in her voice:

"Where'd Pamelie spend the night, ef her pa wouldn't let her in?"

"In the meeting house," Mrs. Blufton informed her.

Halleluiah Givings sat quietly listening, her big blue eyes full of sympathy for the girl under discussion. Halleluiah did not believe Pamelie had really sinned in going away with Bane, for Pamelie herself had told her that she had left Bane the minute she found out he

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

did not intend to marry her. True, circumstantial evidence was somewhat against Pamelie, but Halleluiah had believed her story, and, believing it, she pitied her now that the others were criticizing her so harshly. Anyway, what right had these women to be so hard on Pamelie, when some of them had been indiscreet in their youth, especially Mrs. Blufton. Why, had not Halleluiah often heard how terribly Mrs. Blufton had been talked about when she was young? Halleluiah smiled sadly as she thought of Pamelie. In a little while Mrs. Blufton's voice twanked out again:

"Pamelie ought to have stayed in the city an' not come back hum to disgrace her folks."

"Do you reckon she'll have the outfroentry to jine in the fiddling contest?" a pale little woman wanted to know.

Mrs. Blufton's smile was 'possumlike.

"Oh, of course she will," she replied. "She'll flirt up to that platform with that old fiddle of hern and play 'Silver Threads Among the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Gold' in sich a way as to make them jedges from the county seat set up an creen their necks; then, when they slap their hands together like a passel o' foolish boys, she'll smile an' bow and pull off that old moth-eaten tune, 'When Youn's an' I Was Young, Maggie,' and the jedges'll give her the prize like they've been a-doing fer the last five years."

The pale little woman shook her head.

"Suppos'n her father don't let her have the fiddle; hit's his'n, yo' know."

Then Mrs. Blufon's eyes brightened a little; for there were only four girls who ever took part in the contest: Pamelie Hanks, Halleluiah Givings, and Mrs. Blufon's two daughters. The other contestants were all men. Mrs. Blufon, who had always harbored a secret hope that one of her own girls would one day carry off the prize, realized all of a sudden that they would stand a better chance of getting it if Pamelie was out of the way. So she de-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

terminated to do all in her power to incite the others against her.

"Ef Bill Hanks won't lend Pamelie his fiddle, and the rest of you refuses to help her out, she'll be forced to drap out of the contest; then somebody else'll have a chanst."

A funny little smile played along Halleluiah Givings' mouth, but the rest of the women drank in Mrs. Blufton's words eagerly, especially her daughters. And when Mrs. Blufton saw that most of them were inclined to agree with her, she went on:

"Hit's about time Pamelie Hanks was a-giving somebody else a chanst to win that ten dollars in gold, anyhow, and all of you what favors not lendin' her a fiddle, rise to yer feet."

Halleluiah Givings and Mrs. Crill were the only ones who remained seated. When Mrs. Blufton saw this, she frowned; for Halleluiah owned the best fiddle in the community—a city man had looked inside it once and offered her ten whole dollars for it, and when Halle-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

luiah refused it, he offered twenty. But she had refused to sell at any price, as it had been in her family for many, many years and she was superstitious about parting with it.

Mrs. Blufton regarded the two seated ones in silence for a few minutes; then, being a tactful person, she decided to win Halleluiah over to her side by flattery. So she argued:

"Ef Pamelie ain't allowed to enter the contest, Halleluiah, you'll stand a mighty good chanst to git the prize; fer ther' ain't a woman present that wouldn't ruther hear you play 'Hop Light Ladies' any day than to listen to them slow-moving tunes of Pamelie's."

"Yes;" agreed the pale one, "I don't know of no music that's livelier than Halleluiah's, unless hit's them jigs the Lard-Can and Lick-skillit Ochestra plays. No cyclone ever got to wher hit was going any quicker'n them tunes gits to folks' feet."

"Now, ain't you talkin'," laughed Mrs. Crill, rising to her feet, shaking off a few steps; then

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

falling on the bench exhausted. "I jest naturally can't keep still when I thinks of 'em."

For the first time since the beginning of the debate, Halleluiaah smiled, though she still remained seated. Mrs. Blufton, who had never before encountered a woman she could not lead, fidgeted nervously. The other women, having grown tired of waiting for the others to rise, dropped back on their seats. Then Mrs. Blufton went over and sat down beside Halleluiaah.

"Now, look-a here, Halleluiaah," she coaxed. "Why don't you say somethin'? You an' Mrs. Crill acts like you're both afeard."

Mrs. Crill smiled peacefully.

"I am afeard," she said in a low voice. "I'm afeared to hound anybody, muchless a girl that ain't ever harmed me none. An' besides, Pam-elie's a mighty young girl to be turned adrift in life jest because she appeared to wrong-step. 'Tain't every woman that kin keep her feet straight in the dance o' life."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Then Mrs. Blufton turned to Halleluiah, who sat looking up into the tree that shadowed her.

"What air you thinking about, Halleluiah," she questioned the thoughtful one.

Halleluiah drew in a deep breath of wholesome air.

"I'm thinking that folks what live in mud-chinked log houses ought not hurl stones, fer fear they'll jostle out the clay an' let the wind through. None of us is got the right to vote Pamelie Hanks hout er this contest."

Mrs. Blufton's eyes flamed.

"I reckon somebody's got to draw the line somewher'," she said with great dignity. "Pamelie Hanks acted like a wanton in going to the city with a man she wasn't wed to, and you nor Mrs. Crill can't deny hit."

Halleluiah rose slowly to her feet and faced the others. Her back was to the road and she did not see Morven and the city girl drive up. She did not know they were listening,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

she would not have cared had she known, for by this time the temperature of her passion had reached its highest point, and her hands were shaking like storm-harassed leaves.

"We ain't none of us got the privilege to vote ag'in Pamelie," she repeated slowly, "fer Pamelie ain't done no wrong—no more'n listening to them honey-dewed words Lemme Bane poured into her ears, jest as you and the rest of us has listened to the men that's sharked us out of our hearts. The man you listened to, Mrs. Blufton, was willing to marry you; ef he hadn't been, hit wouldn't have made much difference to you, because you loved him. Ef Jim Givings had axed me to go to the city with him and git married ther' instead of having the preacher attend to it at this end of the line, why, I'd a gone, for I loved him and believed in him, jest as Pamelie believed in Lemme Bane. One woman ain't so mighty much different from another when she loves; hit's the men that air different."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

The women stirred uneasily, most of them leaning towards Halleluiah's line of argument. But Mrs. Blufton was still cold and unbending, her eyes narrowed to small jade slits as she studied the woman who had dared to oppose her. After a while she spoke:

"Halleluiah Givings, since you've been living down there on Morven's place you've become contaminated with his bossy spirit, and I allow hit won't be long afore you'll be trying to run the women of this county like he's a-running the men folks down his way. Thank goodness, his power ain't reached over this far yet, and I don't reckon it'll be very long afore the rest of the people will be onto him and settle him for his smartness."

Morven coughed to warn her of his presence, the girl at his side moved uneasily. But Mrs. Blufton was too intent on the undoing of Pamelie Hanks to notice them; so she kept on:

"Do youn's mean to say, Halleluiah Giv-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

ings, that you're goin' to lend Pamelie yer fiddle so's she can snatch the prize from under yer very bow?"

The wind parted the foliage and a sudden shot of light fell across Halleluiahs face, which was strangely sweet and peaceful now that her first burst of anger had passed.

"Yes, Mrs. Blufton; I'm going to lend my fiddle, and what's more, she won't have to sleep another night in the meeting house — she's going to stay with me, because I ain't no better'n God, an' ef His house can shelter her, mine ain't too good to. Besides, Pamelie's character's as high above some of them that's aimin' to hound her as the top of that mountain is above us this very minute."

Mrs. Blufton's face was sallow-white in its anger. She was shaking all over. "You're plumb beside yerself, Halleluiahs Givings!" she cried. "And the lie in that little speech o' your'n is more'n I can stand for."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Halleluiahs brows went up in a funny little way, and she continued to smile.

"I reckon you're right about it," she said, with a weak little effort at wit. "There was a bit of l-y-e in my statement—plain old-fashioned potash for pots."

The pale little woman laughed out loud; Mrs. Crill shook quietly, holding her mirth within, but she stopped suddenly as she looked down the road and caught sight of a pretty, sad-faced young girl making her way towards them. It was Pamelie Hanks, and her hands hung empty at her sides. Evidently her father had refused to let her have the fiddle. The pale little woman nudged Halleluiahs playfully.

"Yonder comes yer shining kettle," she smiled, pointing to Pamelie.

Halleluiahs lips quivered, a worried look came into her eyes, but this soon gave place to a smile of happiness as she saw the other women greet Pamelie with outstretched hands. That is, all except Mrs. Blufton, and she had

## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**

pulled away from the others and was making her way down the hill to join the men at the creek—a dethroned queen, who had been robbed of her power by a mere slip of a girl, who had dared to stand for what she believed was right.

## CHAPTER V

Though Morven was a serious young man he possessed a sense of humor, and he smiled when he heard Mrs. Blufton's allusion to himself. He got out of the car and reached back to assist Bevill, and it was the meeting of their fingers that caused the blood to quit his face. She must have noticed how pale he was, for she was silent and thoughtful as she walked by his side down the long grass-covered aisle to a vacant bench in front of where Mrs. Crill and Halleluiah were sitting. Mrs. Crill was glad of this opportunity of meeting the girl who had attracted Morven so strongly, for hers was a real mother-interest in the man. She took in every detail of the girl's dress, speech, manner, and she liked all, especially the dress which was another pink muslin. Pink was

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

just the color to wear against so white a complexion.

"My, my," she murmured half aloud. "City girls what don't have to work in the fields do have the prettiest skins."

Bevill heard, and now a deep rose smeared the white.

Morven smiled. "Yes," he agreed. "But even the sun doesn't seem to mar Miss Bevill's complexion, which only goes to prove how much like a white flower she really is, for white flowers grow whiter in the sunshine."

Bevill's pretty brows lifted.

"Oh, I am afraid you are like Lemme Bane—pouring honey-dewed flattery into my ears," she said.

Mrs. Crill shook her head slowly. "There's no honey-dew in Bennie's speeches," she said. "His words come from the heart—that's the trouble."

Bevill smiled at Morven. "I see you have a warm friend in Mrs. Crill," she said.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

After a while Lemme Bane drove up with Mrs. Smith and Becky. He wore another new suit, and this one was even more gaudy than the other. He was pleased with it, however, and strutted about as if he expected everyone else to be equally as satisfied.

"Well, well," murmured Mrs. Crill, eyeing Bane. "Ef that man ain't the dressiest person in this whole community."

"Yes," agreed Halleluiaah, "Every time he goes to the city he spends ten whole dollars on hisself and comes home with hit wropped up in paper. And I reckon he changes his sweethearts 'bout as often as he changes his clothes."

"Which is fortunate for his sweethearts," laughed Mrs. Crill.

When the judges from the county seat at last arrived, Morven went upon the platform, rang a big farm bell to summon the crowd to order, then called out the name of one of the Blufton girls who happened to be the first on

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

the program. And she, with a smile like her mother's faced the audience a few seconds later. Most of the people wondered how she could do it, with the music she had to offer, for it sounded hard and labored like a wooden-legged man climbing stairs. However, the people who composed her audience were a good-natured, big-hearted set and they applauded her freely when she was through. And when Mrs. Blufton heard the applause she began to plan how she would spend the prize money. She would buy that piece of lindsey woolsey at Potts' store—she had been wanting a new dress for ever so long. She would also buy that—

The clanging of the bell interrupted her planning. And now the Lard Can and Lickskillit Orchestra was on the stage. One man, with his mouth over the edge of a huge lard-can, was making trombone-sounding music; another, beating a swinging skillit with an iron poker, was making a noise that sounded like

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

the end man in a moving picture orchestra. But the music was good and tuneful, in spite of the crude instruments, it was an agreeable accompaniment to the three fiddlers who were playing one of those stirring, feet-moving jigs:

“Oh, the Jones-es boys they ran a mill;  
Most of the time the mill was still,  
But when it ran it made a noise,  
The mill was run by the Jones-es-es boys.”

The lard can player was scraping his feet to imitate the gushing waters of a mill. In fact, most everybody in the audience was keeping time, for the music had a swing to it that was catching. Mrs. Crill had to bite her lips to keep from rising to her feet, for she had never gotten over her dancing days, was as fond of a little fling as she had ever been. Keeping still was hard for her, and she was relieved when the orchestra at last stopped playing and Hal-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

leluiah went up for her turn. And while Halleluiah's music was sweet and pleasing it did not last long, for Halleluiah's repertoire was very limited.

Then came Pamelie Hanks' turn. She smiled a little sadly as she took the fiddle from Halleluiah and walked up the few steps to the stage, though the sadness soon left her face as the strains of her music floated out over the air and soared skyward. Her playing was unusually appealing today — she was getting more music out of Halleluiah's violin than she had ever gotten out of her father's. The long-drawn, quivering notes held her listeners so spellbound that they scarcely breathed during her recital, for though they had heard the tunes many times before, there was something in the way she played them today that made them new again. It was Morven himself who handed her the prize some minutes later, and it was Mrs. Blufton herself who threw Morven a glance that would have slain him if glances

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

could do such a thing. Anyway, her eyes were full of piercing arrows, knives, hatchets, and her face was a study in gray-green anger as she muttered to herself:

"Well, Mr. Smarty, I reckon the time's not very fur off afore you'll be robbed of yer mighty power in this here county. You'll be picked clean of hit afore another moon."

Lemme Bane drove past her on her way home and she called out to him:

"Has Morven paid yer maw fer the damage he done her cow?"

He drew in his horses and looked back at her. "Not yet," he admitted gruffly.

She grinned. "And I don't reckon he aims to," she said. "It'd take a real man to bring Morven to taw."

Mrs. Smith, sitting on the rear seat of Bane's surrey, frowned. She did not like the tone of Mrs. Blufton's voice. It sounded squeaky and high like her daughter's fiddle.

Bane's face had darkened. "I reckon I'm

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

big enough to handle Morven and his likes," he said to Mrs. Blufton, and then drove on.

Mrs. Blufton smiled to herself as she watched Bane's vehicle out of sight. She was pleased to know her poisoned arrow had struck straight into the brain of the big, hulking weakling she had been playing upon, for Bane was all physical and nothing mental. When he was out of sight of Mrs. Blufton, he turned to Becky Smith and repeated:

"I'll show everybody that I'm man enough to handle Morven."

Mrs. Smith's eyes swept the man in front of her.

"Nobody denies you're not big enough to whip most any man, Lemme Bane, but that ain't the question. Air you big enough to let a decent man what ain't a-harmin' you alone?"

The shadow on his face darkened. "Well, I ain't aimin' to attack no decent man," he mumbled.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Mrs. Smith sighed impatiently and settled back in her seat. Becky gazed straight ahead of her, a queer expression on her face.

Meanwhile Morven and the girl he loved were driving far in advance of the others, the constrained feeling that had been between them all day not yet having fallen away from them; for neither could forget that time their lips had met; it was the memory of it that robbed them now of that companionship they had enjoyed the first day of their meeting.

It was not long before they came in sight of Morven's home which they had to pass on the way to the Smith's. Bevill made some comment on the picturesque setting, and Morven stopped the car and begged her to go inside with him and look around. She could not resist the temptation, and followed him in.

Though the living room was a very sizable one, Bevill had never seen so many interest-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

ing things in a place of its dimensions: a glass case filled with Cherokee beadwork—belts, garters, head ornaments, moccasins—stood in one corner; highly decorated earthen pots sat on the mantel; oddly-carved furniture was placed here and there about the room; numerous blankets hung along the walls.

Bevill stopped in front of a blanket and examined it carefully. Morven, standing behind her, explained it was very old, having been woven by a Cherokee princess before the Indians quitted Georgia.

The girl's beautiful eyes shone with interest. "I didn't know Indians ever used such soft and pleasing colors," she remarked.

He smiled down at her from his splendid height.

"Yes; the Cherokees formerly used natural dyes, and their blankets were remarkable for their delicate blending of colors."

"I see you are familiar with the customs of the Georgia Indians," she said.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

His face was serious now. "Yes; I have studied their habits and religion," he answered. "I—"

"Oh, look!" she interrupted him. "How lovely!"

He looked. They were in front of the case of beadwork now and the glittering little ornaments had attracted her woman's fancy. He opened the door, drew out a piece of leather and translated the writing thereon:

"The voice in the water-fall is calling to me,  
And the voice in my heart is calling for you,  
But your heart is calling another mate;  
So I go to the water-fall."

"How pretty, but how tragic!" she exclaimed, looking at the lettering carefully. She wondered where he had learned the Cherokee language.

He put the leather back in the case and took out a piece of beadwork. It was a little head

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

ornament, with pink and white beads worked into a beautiful design of flowers. Bevill was enthusiastic.

"It is the prettiest piece of beadwork I ever saw," she breathed.

He removed her hat and fastened the band around her head.

"It looks as though it were made for you," he said seriously. "It has your favorite colors—pink and white, and I don't believe the little princess could have worn it more gracefully."

She spun over to a mirror and looked at herself. "It is becoming," she admitted with an air that indicated she was thinking of the headband, not her own lovely reflection. Then she made a movement to unfasten it, but he caught her hands and held them.

"I want you to keep it," he urged.

Her eyes widened. "Oh, no;" she remonstrated, "it would break into your collection."

He smiled. "I have a very selfish motive in wanting you to keep it," he explained. "There

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

is a very pretty superstition connected with it which says that the woman who wears it shall think of the man who gave it to her."

"But I do not need it to think of you," she said in a low little voice.

He caught her hand, but she drew it away from him with a frightened little movement. "Oh, I was only teasing," she hastened to explain.

His face shadowed. "But you will keep it and wear it?" he pleaded.

She looked up into his eyes and then caught her breath quickly. "Yes," she promised in a tremulous voice, "I shall keep it and wear it."

Her reply gave him courage. He went a step closer. "There is something else I want to ask you," he said bravely, searching her very soul. "I want to ask you to be my wife."

She fell back suddenly, for she was quite unprepared for his confession, quite unable to answer him. She was sure she loved him, this

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

serious young man of the mountains, but she was not sure she wanted to marry him—she had hoped to be able to put marriage off for a good many years yet. She looked at him carefully. And now the expression of hope had faded and his face was sad again. It was the trouble in his eyes that made it hard for her to say “no” right then. She shrank from hurting him. So she merely said:

“Please—give—me a little more time to think it over.”

He winced from the pain of it. Being only a man of the woods, he had no art to hide his true heart from her, and when she saw how deeply he was wounded she went very close to him and laid her little white hand on his arm.

“It isn’t because I don’t love you,” she trembled. “It is because I would give us both more time to be sure of ourselves.”

Unconsciously she had let down the bars that made him master, for not even a timid

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

man of the woods could have resisted taking her in his arms after her sweet confession, and her heart was throbbing against his before she had time to realize what had happened. And then his lips were on hers and she was trembling under their pressure, trembling like a storm-beaten bird, for she realized this was no simple man of the mountains she had to deal with. It was Morven's very strength that held her under his spell. She quivered from sheer happiness as she felt the iron-grip of his arms, for, lighthearted and free as she was, no man had ever held her in his arms until he had held her that other day.

A little later they were driving along the highway to the Smith home. The sun had dropped below the western horizon, and Morven had thrown back the top of the automobile so the cool breeze could play along their faces. They were still in the broad part of the road

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

when she noticed a deep mining shaft to the left of them and asked:

"Was that a gold mine?"

He turned and looked down the perpendicular, salmon-colored walls of the old pit. "Yes; it was worked out directly after the Cherokees left these regions. The government operated a mint here at that time, having coined over forty million dollars' worth of gold."

She was surprised. "Are there any mines in operation around here now?" she queried.

"Yes; several. Twenty stamps of one of the old mills were started up last week."

She thought she knew what he meant but was not quite sure. She made no further inquiry and they rode on in silence for a long time, but oh, what an eloquent silence, with its memories of—cows and things, for they were on that part of the highway now where they had first met.

He steered his car into the nearest niche and stopped.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"I love this spot," he whispered to her. "It is where I first saw happiness."

She smiled, and there was sweet appreciation in the smile.

"Yes;" she agreed, "it is a beautiful place—its chief attraction is the view one gets of the water-falls below."

His face dropped. "Oh, I see. Memories of our first day are not sacred to you," he said with a boyish pout.

She looked away from him, her eyes wandering up the clay wall of the dug-out. "Yes, they are," she scarcely breathed, "and I too love this little nook. It sheltered me from those grouchy drivers that day. I don't know what would have become of me if you hadn't come to my aid. It was awfully good of you to bother with a girl you didn't know."

He made no effort to answer her right away—just put out his arm and drew her closely to him. Then after a long silence he laid his lips against her dark wavy hair and told her

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

he had loved her the first moment he saw her, that he supposed that was why he had been so eager to help her. She sighed peacefully in his arms and closed her eyes, the noise of the falls floating up to them as she repeated in a hushed little voice:

"The voice in the water-fall is calling to me."

And he took it up, holding her closer, ever closer to him as he quoted:

"And the voice in my heart is calling for you,  
But the voice in your heart——"

She stopped him. "Don't finish it," she begged. "My heart does not call another."

He smiled sadly, "If it should, I'd go to the water-fall."

She shuddered. "Don't talk about it!"

He looked down at the frothing waters. "If I should lose you, I'd fling myself into that river, just as the unhappy Indian lover did years ago."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Don't!" She put her hand on his arm. Her face was pale.

He turned his eyes away from the waterfall and looked at her. The look he gave her was a conglomeration of love, fear, pity. She caught the look, and a tremulous little breath escaped her. He snatched her to him desperately, and in another second she was quivering under his kiss.

Oh, what a beautiful world, with its mountains and rivers and flowers and—love!

## CHAPTER VI

He could not see her at all the following day, for besides being busy with a case in court all day, he had to attend an important political meeting at night, a meeting arranged by friends who were urging him to run for state senator from their district. The matter had only appealed to him slightly at first, as he thought Colonel Brock, the candidate already in the field, was too strong a man for him to oppose, but now he regarded it in altogether a different light; for the girl he loved lived in the city, and now he welcomed any excuse for visiting it as often as possible. So he had recently thrown his whole heart and soul into the coming election, having already allowed his friends to enter his name. He had not mentioned his political ambitions to Bevill.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Perhaps it was because he had misgivings as to the outcome of the race.

Bevill! How he missed not seeing her that day. Even his busiest hours had dragged through never-ending lengths, it seemed. And when he at last did draw away from the group of men who still lingered outside the courthouse at Yellow Gold, he felt a great, draggy weight lift from his heart; for now he was free to think of her!

He stopped by the drug store and purchased a box of candy that had just come in on the wagon train; for Yellow Gold was as far from a railroad as it had ever been — twenty-six miles lay between it and the nearest station. Then he came out and walked along the little streets until he reached the little footway that led to his mountain home, and as he trod it, his head high, the moon casting its pale light on his handsome face, the cool evening breeze sweeping his thick hair, the memory of his last day with Bevill rushed over him; he fancied

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

their meeting all over again, and smiled. He was still thinking of Bevill when he ran into Jim Givings at the crossways near the foot of the hill driving home from Yellow Gold. Jim drew in his horses.

"Won't youn's come with me?" he invited.

When Morven told him he preferred to walk, on account of being closely confined all day, Jim's smile broadened, and he drawled on:

"I reckon walking is better for you, an' I also reckon hit's wise of ye to enter the race for senator. I hope yo'll win."

Morven's eyes had a far-away look in them. "Thank you, Jim," he said seriously. "I hope I haven't made a mistake."

Jim straightened up. "There ain't no doubt about your being the man fer the job," he assured, "but I'm kinder scared of them Smith folks—they might give ye trouble, on account of the dipping vat. They ain't got that out of their systems yet."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Morven thought of his encounter with Lemme Bane. "Yes, I know," he said thoughtfully.

"But you don't know all I do about them folks," drawled Jim in his grim, laconic way as he drove on down the road. "You don't know all."

Morven's face was more thoughtful as he walked on and struck into a short cut, and it was not many minutes now before he had reached home and joined Mrs. Crill who was on the porch waiting for him.

"How'd everything come along?" she asked eagerly.

He told her of all the happenings of the day, just as he had told her of his trials when he was a little boy. She smiled as he narrated the outcome of the political meeting; for she approved of his entering the race, just as she had always approved of his every move in life. Then, after a while, a silence fell over them,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

and a mocking bird began to sing in a tree very close to the house.

"Listen!" whispered Mrs. Crill. "It's going to sing its climbin' song."

They were breathless as they sat listening to the little songster, now on the lowest limb of the tree, sing its way up every branch until it was in the tip-top where it sat pouring forth its sweetest trills over the night air.

"How wonderful," breathed Mrs. Crill.

Morven watched the little fellow in the feathery-foliaged tree that stood between them and the moon. "A mocking bird's song has always had a peculiar fascination for me," he told her.

"I hope he'll fly off from the top and not descend the tree," she said in an anxious whisper, "for it's bad luck to see a mocking bird descend the tree."

Morven laughed softly. "Why, you are not superstitious about hearing its descending song, are you?" he teased.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Yes, if a mocking bird climbs a tree, singing, and comes down again instead of flying off from the top, hit's a sure sign your hopes will rise only to fall again. Hit's a sure, sure sign."

"Why, Mrs. Crill!" he smiled. "That's merely an old Cherokee superstition."

She shook her head thoughtfully. "Yes, I know," she said. "But your grandmother was a Cherokee, and ef anybody ought to heed their superstitions, you should."

A strange shadow came over his face—he had almost forgotten there was any Indian blood in his veins. He supposed he ought to tell Bevill about it, and he wondered if it would make any difference with her.

While he thought of the girl, and wondered, the mocking bird began to descend the tree, it's low, gurgling notes having the sound of a dropping hope!

While Morven had been busy all day with

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

court affairs, Bevill had spent the day in the woods with Becky Smith, Pamelie Hanks, and Halleluiah Givings. With lunch-basket and books, Becky Smith and Bevill had sought the mossy solitude of a cool little spring, to spend a pleasant hour or two, and there they met Pamelie and Halleluiah, with lunch-basket and fiddles, bent on the same enjoyment.

"Well, I declare," giggled Becky as she spied Pamelie and Halleluiah coming towards them. "Ain't it funny youn's took the same notion we uns did?"

"Well, you see," explained Halleluiah, dropping on a bench stretched between two trees, "hit's this way: Jim and all the other men folks down our way went over to Yellow Gold to spend the day, an' me and Pamelie decided to have a little outin' of our own."

When Bevill spied Halleluiah's fiddle, she cried out in an excited voice: "Oh, I'm glad you brought your violin, Halleluiah, for we can have a little dance."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

As Halleluiahs began to play, "Hop Light Ladies," Bevill moved in and out among the wood shadows, lightly, gracefully, a mere child of nature now, along with those other girls, a happy, carefree being, who loved the woods-girls because their sweet, simple natures appealed to her as strongly as did the fresh green country in which they lived. The woodsy freshness of old Cherokee was proving itself a sure antidote for high-pressure society life, and Bevill felt contented to remain in its soothing atmosphere until late fall.

After a while Becky and Pamelie joined in the dance, and the girls looked like three wood nymphs turned loose, their movements were so full of youth and grace, so full of the very joy of living. Bevill was so quick of motion, her head bending to and fro with the movement of her body, that her hair came loose and fell in heavy brown waves over her shoulders. Becky stopped suddenly and looked at her with admiring eyes.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"You surely look like an Indian," she said to Bevill.

Then Bevill stopped. "Wait a minute," she said, taking the head-band from her pocket and tying it around her head. "Now I am an Indian!"

Halleluiah gazed at the ornament with wide open eyes. "Did Mr. Morven give it to ye?" she asked seriously.

Bevill told her he did, and then Halleluiah's face took on a worried look.

"I didn't think he'd ever part with that," she said in a low voice. "Hit was his grandmother's."

Bevill looked at her quickly, her brows going up a trifle as she answered: "Why, he told me it once belonged to an Indian princess."

Halleluiah smiled her slow, sweet smile. "His grandmother was an Indian princess," she faltered. "He's a quarter-breed, you know."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Horror filled Bevill's face, her hands trembled. "Please don't say that," she begged frantically. "Please don't say that word."

Halleluiah looked at her with troubled eyes. "Would his being an Indian make any difference to ye?" she asked.

Bevill's soft sigh spread along the woods. "I don't know," she trembled.

Then a strange silence fell on the group, the mountain girls studying their city friend with a sudden new interest. Could it be true that she loved Morven, as her voice had betrayed, or was hers just a friendly interest in the man? Bevill was so deeply concerned about Morven that she did not notice how closely she was being watched. She turned to Becky Smith, a deep shadow in her eyes, and asked:

"What did Lemme Bane mean when he said your mother's greatest sorrow was due to Mr. Morven?"

Becky looked down at the moss-covered ground in silence. But Bevill was insistent.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"What did he mean, Becky?" she pleaded.  
"How has this man injured your mother?"

Becky looked away from her. "Oh, he himself ain't ever harmed her," stammered the girl. "Hit was his pa."

"What did he do?"

"Nothin' much—jest killed my pa."

"Becky!" Bevill's face was white and pitiful. "You don't mean to say his father was a murderer—a quarter-breed murderer!"

"Yes."

Then Halleluiah put in her defense by explaining she had heard it was a case of self-preservation, but this seemed to rouse Becky a trifle and she went on with some bitterness:

"Ef Morven was justified in killing my pa, why didn't he stay on fer his trial and not run off to the woods like he did?"

For once in her life Halleluiah had no immediate answer.

A few minutes later Bevill dragged up the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

trail to Mrs. Smith's, leaving the girls wondering, staring at her blankly. They could not understand why the city girl's manner had become suddenly so drear.

Bevill did not close her eyes that night—just sat at the window looking out at the moonlight, weighing the question that was troubling her heart: could she marry a man who was a quarterbreed Indian, whose father was a murderer? Could she, the only surviving member of a long line of proud ancestors, mate with a man who was doubly stained? Back home, her guardian had always urged her to weigh the question of matrimony very carefully, and now she was weighing it for the first time in her life. Could this man who had descended from a murderous Indian breed be altogether free from the taint of his blood? True, he seemed a very superior sort of a person, but she knew she could not go back to the city and announce to her friends that she was going to marry an Indian. She could never do such a

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

thing. Her lips drew tight over her pretty teeth, her hands clenched and beat hard against the window-sill, hard as the motion of her heart against her breast; a deep, heartbroken sigh gushed up from her soul. Then she shook her head slowly; for she had made up her mind. She could not do it, could not marry a man whose blood and name were tainted, stained. Even though it tore her heart to do so, she must give him up! With her mind fully made up, she rose from the window and went over to her bed.

Big, black clouds trampled upon the moon's face, causing a sullen hue to cover the woods. And a little later the grand old mountains of Cherokee leaned their heads against the clouds and wept!

## CHAPTER VII

Bevill awoke early the next morning, and lost no time in packing her trunk; for she had made up her mind to leave without seeing Morven again—she dared not trust herself to do so, as she realized how complete was his power over her.

Mrs. Smith was shocked when she learned of the girl's intention. The good woman voiced her genuine disappointment:

"I never thought you aimed to leave until fall, an' I ain't quite prepared to give ye up yet." And later when Bevill offered her the money for her board, Mrs. Smith pushed it back in the girl's hand.

"Don't bother about paying me now," she urged. "Wait till yo' air back in the city and can spare hit better."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Bevill smiled.

"You must keep the money—it won't inconvenience me," she said in a low little voice. "I have enough to see me safely home."

"I know, but you seemed worried over something," apologized Mrs. Smith, still studying the girl's face.

Something in Bevill's heart shot up to her eyes and lay there for a moment; then died away. Her face was smiling, her voice calm, as she threw her arm around her friend and bade her farewell. Becky, looking on, was crying softly.

"I'll be back again some day, maybe," she said. In another instant she had passed out of the old mountain home as quietly as she had come into it.

Morven had not slept well during the night—the mocking bird's descending song had rung in his ears all night long. He could not get rid of it. It seemed as if the spirits of old

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Cherokee had come to him to warn him of what the morning's sun would bring. And though he was compelled to be at the court house again the following day, he pulled himself away early in the afternoon and drove straight to the Smith home. He sped along very rapidly at first, coasting down dizzy hills, bumping along creek bottoms until he got to the good part of the road. He did not slow down until he came to that part of the highway where the turns were sharp and dangerous. He met Jim and Halleluiahs Givings near the first niche, and turned in to let them pass.

"How ye come on?" drawled Jim, in greeting.

Morven smiled and told him he felt well, and he asked Jim if he had been to the Smith's.

"No," returned Jim. "Me an' Halleluiahs has been to take Pamelie home."

Morven's face brightened with interest. "Did her father take her in?"

Both Jim and his wife grinned. "He shore-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

ly did," replied Jim. "He was mighty glad to git her back."

"Thanks to Halleluiah," said Morven seriously.

"Yes, glory to Halleluiah," laughed Jim. "You see, this little wife of mine had sich a shoutin' Christian of a mother, that folks gave her the name of Halleluiah, and this girl of her'n inherited her name and religion, fer my wife's going to have things run right or not at all."

Halleluiah colored a little. "Drive on, Jim," she said in her soft, low drawl. "Mr. Morven ain't got all day to listen to you talk."

Jim drove.

Growing more impatient every second to see the girl he loved, Morven continued his way at a heightened speed. He was so anxious to see her that he was risking a visit among his enemies, going into the very hot-bed of them, though he seemed to have forgotten the danger of it—his thoughts were so full of

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

other matters. When he at last reached the house, Mrs. Smith was sitting on the porch alone, and her eyes were puzzled when he asked for Bevill.

"Why, didn't you know she'd gone back to the city?" she asked. Even in the twilight she could see his face blanch.

"No," he stammered, trying hard to control his voice.

"She left early this morning."

"Didn't she leave me a message?"

A sorrow-shadow flitted across her face. "No; but I reckon she'll be a-writing you soon."

He frowned. "I thought she intended staying until fall."

"So'd I, but I reckon she changed her mind."

She invited him to have a seat, but he declined, and in a little while he dropped down the path to his car, his head bowed under the weight of it all, the light faded from his eyes. The engine made a sputtering noise as he

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

pulled off through the falling night at a pace that was terrible on that part of the highway with its swinging, treacherous curves. One false movement of the steering wheel would have sent him forth into the depths of the great, yawning chasm, into the very where-ness of the Great Forever. A slow-moving car, looming up ahead of him, was all that saved him that night. He stopped to let it get far in advance, and in the pause, the murmur of the falls floated up to him with the song of his grandmother's people in its voice:

"The voice in the water-fall is calling to me,  
And the voice in my heart is calling to you,  
But your heart is calling another mate;  
So I go to the water-fall."

Crushed and dejected as a cyclone-torn oak, a deep groan rose up from his soul; but the spirits of his forefathers, lingering in the white spray of the falls, warned him that a good

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Indian always bore his grief in silence. He bit his lips. He had not needed his Indian blood before—in those days when he was regarded the likeliest plow-boy in the community and the brightest student in school. He had not needed it then, in those days of early struggles. But, oh, God! How he needed it now!

## CHAPTER VIII

Another day found Bevill in pale pink lingerie, reclining among pink-flowered cushions on a white wicker couch, gazing dreamily at the rose-colored wall-paper of her luxuriously-appointed boudoir. Everything in the room was rose-hued except its owner, and she was decidedly blue, brought on from haunting memories of a girl and a man driving cows along a mountain trail. Her hands went up suddenly and pressed against her eyes, as if she would shut out those scenes which continued to hang before her mental vision. The perfume of flowers, thoughtful friends had sent her only served to increase the sad longings of her heart; for the blue-topped, dew-sopped, wood-shadowed old mountains of Cherokee were calling to her, the cool, wet

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

spray of their water-falls; the dark, earthy-smelling trails of their forests; the keen, sweet breath of their flowers. She could almost see the trees of those old mountains. And beneath those trees stood a man! Morven, the last of the Mocking Bird's breed was beckoning her to come back to him; his eyes were full of sorrow, reproach!

For a whole week she denied herself to friends, but soon there came a day when she went down into the drawing-room to receive admirers who had flocked back into the radiance of her delightful presence as insects had flown into the glow of Mrs. Smith's porch lantern. And though Bevill clung to mountain memories for a while, it was not long before she was back in the social whirl of life, doing all in her power to fox-trot, walk-waltz, one-step thoughts of Morven out of her mind. In sheer desperation she accepted every invitation that came her way, and her guardian smiled pleasantly in the reflection of

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

her beaminess, though he continued to warn her many times a day to be careful of any decision she might make in favor of any of her present step-haunters.

She smiled half-sadly. "You never give me credit of having attractions of my own, Mr. Young."

To which he replied: "You are attractive enough, but mere physical perfection can not compete with the drawing qualities of gold. There's not a real man among your present cortege of suitors."

She was thoughtful for a long time. Then: "Just what is your idea of a real man?"

He coughed sharply. "One who has done something for himself, and does not live merely to spend what his father has worked for. A man who has fought through life's tangled ways and come out an honest winner."

She sighed. Mountains, rivers, wild-flowers

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

floated all around her. Finally she asked in a hushed little voice:

"Suppose a girl should find such a man and that man was a quarterbreed Indian?"

He just looked at her. But the look was sufficient.

In a little while she slipped away from him and up to her room. Still haunted by certain memories, she got the little bead band and put it on; then she sat down to write Morven a note. She told him she was sorry to have come away without seeing him again, but that she had been too big a coward to face him with the only answer she had for him—that it was quite impossible for her to be his wife. She hoped he would forgive her, forget her and all that. It was a careless-sounding little note. There was nothing in it to tell him how the tears had welled into her eyes while she was writing it; nothing to tell how heavy her soul felt when she sealed it and handed it to her maid to mail. Even the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

maid, who was so near her, had no idea how tired her heart was.

Up in the mountains, Morven received the note, read it through several times, and then, remembering how a good Indian ought to act, threw himself on his bed and—sobbed. His Indian ancestors must have laughed from the spirit world. It was enough to make them. For hours he lay there and when he did at last arise, the shadows of night had fallen on the earth, shadows that were relieved by the light of a full moon. It was the voice of the waterfall that called him out into the night, to wander along the steep, slippery trail to the falls. Slowly, he beat his way down the stony path until he came to the very brink of the river. He was so close to the falls that the spray wet him through and through, but he seemed not to mind it. The dampness soothed his fevered brow, and he just stood there and drank it in. One minute he would tell himself that Bevill had played with him, that she was just a heart-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

less city flirt like those he had read about in books, and the next he would declare that no possible excuse but love could be offered for the way she had allowed him to kiss her, had lain upon his very heart-beats. Surely she had loved him.

The voice in the water-fall lost some of its persuasion as he thought along this line. But the doubt took hold of him again, the terrible doubt of her, and it was now that the same despair that had seized that Indian lover of the years ago closed its clawlike fingers around him. Life had no attraction for him now, the joy of it was as far from him as the waters that had passed over the falls centuries ago. The lure of living no longer held him. The voice in the water-fall was calling—calling. He stepped closer to the brink!

What made him draw back was a mystery to him. Perhaps it was the thought of Mrs. Crill that suddenly flashed across his brain. Anyway, some unseen power seemed to take

## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**

hold of his arm and pull him backward, backward until the contact of a big rock interrupted his progress. Wet and chilled to the bone by this time, he dropped down on the rock and began to think of Mrs. Crill, and from her his thoughts glanced off to his school days at Heidelberg. He smiled faintly. Why had he gone so far away from home to perfect himself in certain branches only to return to the isolation of a village that lay sleeping in the heart of old Cherokee. He had not intended to come back to the home of his youth to practice law, but he had scarcely put his feet on American soil once again when he felt something drawing him back to the Georgia Blue Ridge. It must have been the voice of his ancestors calling him.

He thought of the many pretty girls he had met while away from home. It was strange he had not fallen in love with some of them. His face saddened. He had passed through his college days unsinged and unstained. God

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

had kept him clean for the woman he was to love. Oh, the mockery of it! God had kept him for the woman who was too heartless to care. What a consummate bungler Fate was, anyway.

The voice in the water seemed to die away, and Morven rose and started up a different, much steeper path home. It was a little trail that led directly up to the overhanging new highway, and about three hundred yards up he came upon the deserted little cabin that had been his grandparent's home. He went in and looked up at the moon through its scarcely-covered roof. The worn old planks of the floor rattled under his step as he crossed over to the stone fireplace and struck a match to some trash in it, and as the fire's glow lighted up the hut, he took off his coat and laid it in front of it to dry. Then he stretched himself on the floor to enjoy the warmth, and in a little while was sound asleep and dreaming of his little Indian grandmother, whose blood in

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

his veins was the real cause of his suffering tonight.

In the dream, Coonee Latee came to him in all the beauty of her youth, her hair falling in long black braids over her shoulders, her dainty feet glittering with bright beads. Even the chain of nuggets was around her neck, though her forehead was minus its customary head band. She pointed her finger at Morven and said in a voice full of soft reproach:

"You parted with the secret of Cherokee when you gave that girl the beaded head band."

What a beautiful little creature she looked to the dreaming man. The dream-thought occurred to him that he had never seen a woman so beautiful as she. No pure-bred woman he had ever beheld could compare with her. He stretched his arms towards her. Then suddenly he was awake and she was gone.

He got up, put on his coat which was now dry and warm, and hurried out into the night,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

still haunted by the plaintive voice he had heard in his dream, still wondering what the significance of it could be. It was after twelve o'clock when he at last reached home, but he found Mrs. Crill waiting for him.

"Did you ever see my grandmother?" he asked abruptly.

She looked surprised. "No; but my mother knew her quite well."

His breath came quickly. "Did your mother ever tell you anything about her?"

She thought intensely for a moment. "Yes; Mother was very fond of her, and once she told me that your grandmother would act awfully queer when she heard of some new gold mine wearing out after only a few months' working. It seemed to please her to learn of these failures—it did her good all over. She seemed to hate miners—maybe that was why she enjoyed their disappointments. When they were around was about the only time she showed her Indian blood. The savage

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

would come to the surface then. Though she married as fine and as educated a gentleman as you'd ever meet up with, she kept away from most of the white folks that came here in those days. Kinder held herself a princess straight to the end, and didn't like to mix too freely. Billy Hanks' family, right here on Fox Mountain, was the only one she visited with much. She was over here pretty near every week. Billy drew this mountain in the land lotteries, you know."

Morven smiled. "Yes; I bought it from Pamelie Hanks' father."

"He was Billy's boy," said Mrs. Crill.

He was thinking deeply. "Was she pretty?" he asked, meaning his grandmother.

Mrs. Crill smiled. "Go look in the mirror and you'll see her eyes. None but a beautiful woman could have handed down such eyes as yours."

He colored a little, and she went on:

"Your grandfather's hair was curly; that's

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

how yours came to be. Your little princess grandmother often teased her husband about his curly hair."

Morven thought on in silence for a moment; then he told Mrs. Crill about his dream. She looked at him and said in a low, serious voice:

"If I was you, I'd ask Miss Bevill to give me back those beads, because I believe your grandmother really came to you, for she surely looked to you just as my mother always described her as looking. You know she died when she was still quite young.

"Yes; I know."

"If I was you I'd get those beads back," she repeated solemnly. "And I'd lose no time in doing it."

He started to his room. "I'm afraid I did not inherit much of the Indian superstition," he said. "My predominating white blood tells me that dreams are merely brought on by bodily sensations, or by previous waking thoughts. Just before I went to sleep in the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

little hut, I was deeply impressed by the thought that I was in the same little home that had sheltered my grandparents. Of course that accounts for my dream."

Mrs. Crill drew in a deep breath. "Well, I don't know that I've got any Indian blood in my veins, but I surely do believe in most of their superstitions. I believe every dream has its significance, and that it's no good sign to hear a mocking bird's descending song."

He frowned. He thought of how his hopes had fallen after hearing the mocking bird's song that night, how the very sun had drifted from his life the following day.

"It really must be an evil omen to hear a mocking bird's descending song," he confessed. Then he bade her good night and went into his room.

That night he dreamed the dream all over again. The same weeping vision of the little princess haunted him, the same plaintive cry was in her voice. She was sorely distressed

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

about the loss of the beads and refused to be comforted.

"You have parted with the secret of Cherokee," she complained, "and now Coonee Latee's spirit will know no rest."

But he only mumbled broken-heartedly:

"Oh, Coonee Latee, your grandson winged his way towards the zenith of love, and fell, a broken heap, on the nadir of despair."

She seemed not to hear him.

"And now Coonee Latee will know no rest," she continued to mourn. Poor Mocking Bird!

When he at last awakened from his dream-burdened sleep, the moon was just dropping below the eastern sky, and the last gurgle of a mocking bird's song was filling the air.

## CHAPTER IX

A month dragged slowly by, a month of hard work and heart struggles for Morven. He had heard nothing else from Bevill, though he had scarcely expected it, for the simple reason that he had not answered her letter. Her brief little note of dismissal had not required an answer, he thought. And though he had made up his mind to forget her as quickly as possible, he had not exactly done so, for she was still in his heart after a month had passed. And mingling with the memories of Bevill was the ever haunting vision of his grandmother, as he had seen her in his dream that night, for, while he tried to argue with himself that dreams were due merely to prevalent physical conditions, he remembered that some of the world's greatest problems had been

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

solved through the aid of dreams. There were many instances which proved that they were sometimes prophetic.

Early the following Saturday afternoon he got in his car and drove over the new highway to the Smith home. Just why he was going there he did not quite know. Perhaps it was because he thought he might hear some news of Beville, for surely she had written Mrs. Smith. He was so eager to reach the place that he did not even hesitate at the little niche—just whirled past it without glancing in its direction, for the little idol he had once worshipped in that shrine was now a crumbling heap of clay. But, broken and crumbled as it was, it still bothered him considerably, for though his heart had been stripped of the last vestige of hope, he just hoped on in spite of it.

Becky Smith was on the porch when he at last reached the house, and she gave him a pleasant smile and motioned him to a chair.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Me an' Ma got a mighty pretty box from Miss Bevill," she announced as if she had divined the reason for his visit.

Though his heart sputtered, his face was calm and indifferent.

"What did she send you?"

"Five pretty ready-made dresses, and Ma a shawl."

"Very thoughtful and generous of her."

"That's not all she sent."

He glanced sidelong at her, his eyes asking the question. She went on:

"She sent Halleluiah and Jim Givings something nice, and she sent Pamelie Hanks a fiddle. Lemme Bane says it must have cost all of a hundred dollars, because him an' Pamelie priced one like it when they was in the city together."

Morven looked surprised. "I was under the impression that Miss Bevill was a poor girl," he said.

Becky smiled. "So was I, but a man I met

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

at Potts' store said he knew of her and she's rich. He said she had plenty money."

He thought a while. "She was very pretty," he said, thinking of her in the past tense. "Very pretty."

"Yes," agreed Becky. "She's pretty, popular, and I don't reckon Heaven could hold any newness for her, do you?"

He smiled and glanced off to where the skyline was peaky and dusky against the sunset. "Did she write anything?"

Becky eyed him mischievously. "Yes; she wrote how much she missed all us folks—said her happiest days were spent up here in the mountains."

A warm little thrill ran through him. "Did she really say that?"

Becky, still smiling, went into the house and brought the letter for him to read. His heart throbbed heavily when he came to the sentence Becky had alluded to. Yes, Bevill really had written that her happiest days were spent in

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

the mountains, and he wondered what had made them so happy, and as he wondered, a soft light came in his eyes. What a poor little crumb of hope it was, but he hugged it to his hungering heart. It was the morsel that was to keep his starving love alive—alive, when he himself had decreed it must die. He had passed that sentence on it the day he received her brief little rejection note.

He read the letter over again, handed it back to Becky, and then they talked of other matters for a long time. And when he at last rose to go, she invited him very sweetly to call again, for her woman's heart understood the condition of his and she was sorry for him. And he, thinking, hoping there would be more letters from the girl he loved, told her he would be back in a few days.

He did not see the dark eyes of Lemme Bane peering at him from a clump of chinquepin across the way, he did not know those eyes had been watching his every movement. He

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

did not know that the owner of the eyes had been growing more and more violently jealous of him every moment that he stood there. He did not hear the gritting of Lemme Bane's teeth as Lem stepped into the road and shook his fist after the departing car. Had he known all this he might have hesitated about returning to the Smith home again very soon; for jealousy, added to a disposition like Bane's was dangerous. It meant treachery, death, anything!

So Morven, innocent of it all, returned to Becky's home in less than a week's time; for Halleluiah Givings had told him of another letter Becky had received. Becky smiled to herself when she saw him coming up the gravelled path, and she slipped into the house and had the letter waiting for him when he at last reached the porch.

"Here it is," she giggled, holding it out to him. "It's got your name in it!"

His hand shook so he could hardly open it,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

but he finally quieted himself sufficiently to read the neatly-written message. He felt a lump in his throat when he came to the passage concerning himself:

"You have written about everybody but Mr. Morven, Becky—I hope he is well."

That was all, but it was enough to feed the flame, and Morven felt better for having read it. And he was so grateful to Becky that he invited her to go for a ride with him, and in a little while they were spinning along the highway in the direction of Yellow Gold. It was a cool, pleasant outing for Becky, who had worked hard all day, but the day was fading fast, and they were forced to turn around in front of Halleluiahs home, in order to get back home before dark. It was when they were backing to turn that Lemme Bane appeared on the highway, his eyes several shades darker than ever.

"I see yo' air taking the city girl's discard," he taunted Becky.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Her face crimsoned. "Ef I was you I wouldn't show my jealousy so plain."

He shoved himself in front of the car to keep Morven from driving on. "Git out and walk home with me," he commanded Becky in a harsh voice.

She tried to smile. "Don't act foolish, Lemme," she said.

Morven caught the mellow tone of her voice and wondered how she could love the man, as her tone indicated.

"Come on," Lemme repeated. "Ef you're going to be my wife you might as well make up your mind to give in to me right now."

For a moment she looked at him in astonishment and growing indignation. Then she turned to Morven and said:

"Drive on, Mr. Morven, I'm not paying no mind to what Lemme says."

And Morven drove on, leaving Bane staring after them, his face a sickly hate-green. He just stood there for a long time getting more

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

and more angry every minute. For he loved Becky as much as such a man was capable of loving, and he hated Morven more than ever now that he was about to get into the good graces of the Smith contingent; for surely if Mrs. Smith and Becky took him in, the others would soon do so. He scowled. He never exactly knew why he had always hated Morven. Perhaps it was an inheritance from his grandfather, for he was Jades Bane's own grandson, and Jades had lived and died hating Archie Morven for winning the Indian princess from him. Yes, it was inheritance. Lemme had inherited all the meanness of his grandfather's wicked heart. Poor thing! He was to be pitied.

After a while he slouched on down the road and entered the Givings' gate. Halleluiahs and Jim were seated on the porch resting after a hard day's hoeing in the fields. They did not receive Bane very cordially, for they were mere people of the woods and knew no way to

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

hide their genuine dislike of the man. But Bane did not seem to notice their coolness—his soul was too full of the jealousy of the moment. He looked at Halleluiah and snarled:

"I reckon you air the one that's been tryin' to make a match betwixt Becky and Morven."

Halleluiah could not refrain from smiling. "Look a-here, Lemme Bane," she warned, "you've got enough to be miserable about without worrying over Mr. Morven and Becky Smith."

He looked a trifle surprised. "What have I got to be unhappy over?" he asked.

She sighed and smoothed back the golden hair from her forehead. "Oh, a whole passel of things ought to be a-worrying you—the way you treated Pamelie Hanks, fer instance. If Becky Smith should take a notion to shove you overboard, don't you reckon it's be what's due you, anyhow?"

He was trembling with rage by this time.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"So it's true," he blurted out. "Becky is soft on Morven?"

She threw him a withering glance. "No; hit ain't true. Becky ain't above making some terrible mistakes in life, but she's got enough sense to know that Mr. Morven's beyond her reach."

"I reckon you think he's too good for her."

"And I don't think that either. He's just a little different from us backwoodsters; that's all."

"How?"

"He's a college educate."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Well, there's lots of girls at Yellow Gold what's got as much learning as he has, and I reckon he'd pick one of 'em ef he really wanted a wife from these regions."

"There ain't a girl at Yellow Gold what's got more sense'n Becky Smith."

"I ain't saying there is, but I do say they've had more schooling. And a man's what paid

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

hide their genuine dislike of the man. But Bane did not seem to notice their coolness—his soul was too full of the jealousy of the moment. He looked at Halleluiah and snarled:

"I reckon you air the one that's been tryin' to make a match betwixt Becky and Morven."

Halleluiah could not refrain from smiling. "Look a-here, Lemme Bane," she warned, "you've got enough to be miserable about without worrying over Mr. Morven and Becky Smith."

He looked a trifle surprised. "What have I got to be unhappy over?" he asked.

She sighed and smoothed back the golden hair from her forehead. "Oh, a whole passel of things ought to be a-worrying you—the way you treated Pamelie Hanks, fer instance. If Becky Smith should take a notion to shove you overboard, don't you reckon it's be what's due you, anyhow?"

He was trembling with rage by this time.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

ting in her wagon, which she had driven in a niche to let a northbound team pass, reading a copy of the county paper by the light of the dying day. She looked up when she heard Bane's footstep.

"I was just reading about the coming election," she told him, "and I see that Morven's out fer the race. Of course you're going to vote for him, being as how he treated yer ma so generous for the damage he done her cow."

"Won't yo' ever keep still on that?" he grumbled.

"Why, shore I will. Ef your ma can overlook such things I'm shore I can. Besides, I reckon it's a mighty little thing to make a fuss over, anyway. That is, it might seem little to some folks. But here in the mountains where people count their wealth by the number of cattle they own, where cattle is their very living, it ought to be different. How long do you reckon city folks'd put up with a law that in-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

jured their business to the very limit of destruction?"

He was looking off across the chasm now, and deep ruts had formed along his forehead. "Mrs. Smith and the others down our way claim their cattle's been considerably benefited," he argued.

Mrs. Blufton received this with noticeable displeasure. "Well, I reckon so long as they think their cows have been improved they'll stand by Morven, and there's some chance of his winning the race. But I'd a pitied him ef a whole passel of the cows had took sick after a dipping. That'd a fixed him fer good an' all. Nobody with a sick cow'd a voted for him."

As she passed on down the road, Bane stood still looking after her, her words ringing in his ears: "Nobody with a sick cow'd vote for him." He was still thinking of what she had said when Morven drove along the road on his way home from Becky's. A man was in the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

car with him now, and Morven was talking with the man and therefore did not see the form of Bane lurking within the shadow of the inner clay wall. It was after Morven had passed that Bane began to walk briskly down the road. He was thinking to himself that there was just one more dipping time before the vat would be closed for the summer. Just once more would the people have to round up their cattle and drive them in for the plunge that so far had benefited them. His eyes narrowed, his lips drew tight over his teeth. How the tide of public opinion would turn if any general sickness should befall the cows, even at this late day. Every one would then be bitter against the man who had been so imperious in having the vat law established. How sudden would be the termination of his lordly reign. Mightier monarchs than he had skidded and turned turtle through causes not nearly so significant!

As these dark and evil thoughts whirled

## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**

through Bane's mind, the dull, monotonous song of an inherited hatred began to sing louder and louder in his heart.

## CHAPTER X

John Peck, the man who had ridden home with Morven, was lately from the West, and had come to the Southern Appalachian gold fields to investigate the old Cherokee mines. But when he asked Morven after supper about the neighboring mines, Morven surprised him by saying he did not think much of them, for the simple reason that none of them had ever turned out large amount of gold.

"But the mines around here have paid dividends, haven't they," asked Peck.

"I think so," was the unsatisfactory reply.

"Evidently you don't take much interest in gold mining."

"Not in the kind that's done around here."

Peck ran his fingers through the dense black

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

growth that framed the lower part of his heavily-tanned, genial-looking face, and then through the gray-tinged hair of his head. He was the large, square-built type of man that has spent much time in the open—even his hands and arms were heavily covered with down. The red color which shone beneath the tan of his face deepened in the light of the fire, which was always indispensable to comfort after sundown in the mountains, no matter how hot the day had been.

"The very fact that most of the mines have played out after only a short life makes me think the main vein has never been touched," he said in a low, mellow voice.

Morven laughed. "As far back as I can remember, men have drifted here from all parts of the world with the same idea, and after prospecting around for a while, have gone back to their homes, much poorer for their investigations."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Peck's deep gray eyes twinkled. "Then I'm just an old story," he remarked.

"Yes. I don't believe there's a district in the whole universe that's been haunted by gold seekers for as long a time as this one. Why, they started coming here directly after the Indians left in thirty-seven, and though they don't stay long, each year brings new ones to take the places of those who have departed."

"What kind of mining has been done?"

"Both vein and surface."

"Has any mining been done in this immediate vicinity?"

"No; this appears to be outside the belt—the auriferous areas occur in narrow, clearly-defined belts."

The Colorado man's eyes narrowed thoughtfully. "I noticed a lot of kaolin in the crevices along the base of this mountain," he observed.

"Yes; kaolin is very plentiful here, but it

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

isnt worth anything so far from a railroad."

A queer little smile played around Peck's mouth. "The finest gold I ever dug out of the earth was so heavily covered with kaolin that it looked like sugar-coated almond nuts."

Morven looked surprised, and began to show a little more interest. "I've never heard anything like that before," he said.

Peck was silent for a few moments, and then asked:

"Do you own this mountain?"

"Yes."

Morven wondered if there really were any more questions Peck could ask. He found out.

"Has this mountain ever been prospected?"

"Not that I know of."

"What's on the other side of it?"

"A small creek circles the base of it over there."

"Any kaolin over there?"

"Yes; the gulleys are white with it."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Peck gazed in the fire for a long time, once more pulling at his beard. Finally he turned to Morven who was staring at him with a quizzical expression in his eyes. "May I prospect the place?"

Morven's smile was full of discouragement. "You have my permission to do so," he replied, "but, as I've told you before, I have absolutely no faith in these gold fields. When the government had its mint here some eighty years ago, it coined up all the gold that these mountains had to offer. It's a good thing California came in with its contributions in forty-nine, or else the treasury would have been minus yellow coin, for the mint here was ready to close down about that time."

Peck's smile was still full of faith. "I'll start in prospecting tomorrow," he announced.

Morven threw back his head and laughed a laugh that was full of genuine amusement. "I wish you luck," he said.

The following day Peck went forth to pros-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

pect the other side of the mountain. He struck into the little trail that led to the summit of the mountain and then down to the creek on the other side. It was a large mountain, a long way around the base, very steep on all sides, and very densely wooded, save in front of Morven's house where the trees had been cut to afford a view of the surrounding valleys and ridges. In fact, the undergrowth was so thick in some places that it was almost impenetrable. But the Colorado man was as sturdy and determined as the sun in its course and he pushed along through the tangled mass until he came to a place where the red clay ditches were striped with white, and here he spent most of the first day in a tireless and fruitless search. And so he continued, day after day, week after week, and still no gold. But he would not give up. Nothing but defeat itself could dampen the ardor of the brawny Westerner, and he was very unwilling to admit defeat yet a while. For he had mined

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

many a pennyweight of gold in his day, and none of it had come any too easy.

A month passed and still he had not found any signs of gold in the mountain; then he began an investigation of the creek, for he knew all gold particles that washed down from the mountain would eventually accumulate in the bed of the creek. Morven had told about a placer mine that was being operated farther down the little affluent, and this made him more confident than ever that the main vein was located somewhere in the locality in which he now worked.

Even his creek prospecting proved unsatisfactory, and one night two weeks later he was forced to seek Morven with the acknowledgment that he had failed. Nothing he had run across resembled gold-bearing quartz in the least degree. Though Morven received the news with an I-told-you-so look, he made no verbal comment. He was not disappointed—he had not hoped. He had never once enter-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

tained the thought that he would ever possess any gold save that he had earned by hard labor. He had once hoped to win the treasure of a woman's love, but even that was a thing of the past with him now, for the girl he loved had cast him aside as easily as she had tossed away her broad-brimmed mountain hat for the more stylish creation she had worn back to the city. Morven smiled sadly as he remembered it all, and he wondered why the thoughts of Bevill always crept in.

Peck discovered the dreamy look in his friend's eyes and he smiled to himself, for he had seen that kind of look before and he knew what it indicated—Morven was thinking of a woman. Being a very considerate man, Peck kept silent and let him think, and Morven's uninterrupted day dream took him back to the time when he had taken up his pen to write Bevill and had dropped it again before he had written one word. The breed of so proud a mortal as the princess of Cherokee could

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

never stoop to ask a woman her reasons for not wanting him. The mere fact that she did not want him was sufficient to keep him from writing, to keep him from ever going near her again.

"I'm sorry your investigations were disappointing," Morven finally said to Peck.

Peck's face brightened. "I could have sworn it was here on the mountain," he declared. "And I still believe the main vein has never been discovered."

It was after Peck had gone into his room and shut the door that Morven's heart began to fill with Bevill again, and he went out on the porch and stood looking up at the starlit sky, all the poetry of an Indian lover's soul crying out:

"Twinkle on her, little stars, and let her know how much I love her!"

At that very moment Bevill was dancing under the glaring light of chandeliers that completely shut out the glimmer of her woods-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

man's little love - messengers. Those poor, blinky little stars might have been hidden behind heavy black clouds for all she knew!

Another week passed and Peck still lingered in Morven's home, for Morven liked the man and was loth to have him leave. But at the end of another week, Peck became restless and told his friend he must be on his way. So Morven drove him to the nearest railroad station and it was with genuine regret that the two men parted. Real sorrow shone in Peck's eyes as he waved his hand at Morven from the rear platform.

Morven sighed as he watched the train out of sight. Thus another man had come into the land of Cherokee, looked around and gone out again. But Morven knew the morrow would bring still another. Old Cherokee Georgia, in all its backwoods fastness, had never lacked for visitors!

## CHAPTER XI

“What’n the world air youn’s doing up there?”

It was Becky Smith’s voice, and Lemme Bane started guiltily at the sound of it. He was behind a clump of bushes a few feet farther up the same brook at which Becky’s cows, on their way home from the dipping vat, were quenching their thirst. It was the same stream they had drank from that other day. Becky felt a peculiar dizziness in her head. Was she dreaming, or had she really seen Lemme pouring something into the water?

“What you doing, Lemme?” she repeated.

He pushed his way through the bushes to her. “Nothin’,” he answered, looking away from her. “I just went up ther’ to rest in the shade.”

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Becky's eyes were troubled, and suddenly she made a quick movement forward, struck each cow with the cane in her hand, and finally succeeded in driving them out of the water before they had half satisfied their thirst.

"What'd you do that for; they're still mighty nigh famished," he said in such a voice as to make Becky ashamed she had harbored the awful suspicion that had taken possession of her. He seemed truly concerned about the cows. They had not had enough water, he thought, and as Becky watched the worry on his face she wondered why such a terrible doubt of him had crept into her heart.

"I—don't like to have them drink much water when they're tired," she found herself explaining, half apologizing. "And besides they've got a long journey ahead of 'em."

"You're late," he said. Everybody else's done passed."

Again that terrible something swept her

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

brain. She wondered how long he had been up there in the bushes before she arrived.

"You don't seem pleased to see me," he pouted. "An' I walked all the way down here to help you drive the cows home."

Her face flushed. Of course that was why he was there—he had been waiting to walk home with her. And she—how could she have thought what she had? She closed her eyes and groped along a few steps before she opened them again. What was coming over her anyway, to be so ready to grasp on to evil thoughts?

"Don't yo' want me to walk home with you?" he asked.

"Why, yes," she answered in a weak voice. "Of course."

He grinned nervously. "I didn't know but that Morven'd be with you."

"Don't be silly, Lemme. Ef you keep on thinking all that foolishness, it won't be long afore you're downright jealous of Mr. Mor-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

ven, and the truth is, he ain't payin' me no mind."

His eyes darkened. "He's been a-hanging around you right smart of late," he sulked.

His deep-rooted jealousy touched her vanity just a little; so she encouraged it. "He shore can drive that car of his'n fine—he's about the speedingest driver I ever saw. He outbeats a cyclone, which is Halleluiah's idea of fastness."

"Halleluiah's not the only person that thinks a cyclone's quick," he said, striking the ground with the stick in his hand. She eyed him mischievously. "I know; but Mr. Morven can drive easier than the wind itself."

He frowned. She kept on:

"And that's not the only thing he's running smooth these days—he's running a mighty easy race for senator."

He threw back his head and forced a laugh. "He stands about as much chanst of winning as a three-legged rabbit against a hound."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

She looked at him quickly. "Oh, yes he does. He's the same as got it, no matter ef he is so powerful much younger'n Col. Brock."

"He seems to please you," he slurred.

She glanced off to distant mountain peaks, to hide the twinkle in her eyes. "He does please me," she owned. "Fer I reckon he's about the handsomest man I ever seed."

He stopped dead still, caught her arm roughly, his face growing green with anger. "Don't talk like a simpleton. Morven's got enough women on his string without adding you."

She smiled. "Won't jealousy make a man act mean?" she said as she pulled her arm away from him and rubbed the place he had pinched. "And hit'll make him falsify too; fer you know good and well that Mr. Morven never cared for but one woman in all his life."

"And who's that?" he asked breathlessly.

"Why, hit's—" She caught the anxiety in his look, and being merely a child, the tempta-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

tion to tease him was too great for her to withstand. "Why, hit's me, of course," she finished. But she regretted it when she saw how angry he was.

"I knew all the time he was after you," he raged. "Even if Halleluiaah Givings did try to throw me off."

Her eyes opened wider. "You haven't been worrying Halleluiaah, have you?"

"I told her my opinion of her."

"And what'd she say."

"That I was foolish; that Morven's beyond your reach."

"Did Halleluiaah say that?"

"Yes."

She smiled serenely. "Well, that shows how much she knows about it," she tossed. "Morven's not beyond my reach."

All the fury that was capable of brewing in his heart was at its height now. "I'll fix Halleluiaah's puny Jim fer her meddling," he said, drawing himself up, knotting his fist, and hold-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

ing out his muscular arm for her to admire.

"I guess you'll admit you're sorry fer Jim."

She measured the big, hulking strength of him. "What's he got to do with it?"

"Nothing; but he's got to answer fer his woman."

"And what's she done?"

He glared at her. "Done all in her power to throw you and that man together. I've been watching her movements."

She laughed nervously. "Can't you see, Lemme, that I've jest been a-teasin' you?"

"No; I can't see," he growled, "and I'm going to settle with Jim. Talking about cyclones—he'll think one's struck him, I reckon." Again he held out his arm for her to behold, but she only sighed and said in a low, tremulous voice:

"You may be bigger and stronger'n Jim, but even ef you was as tall as Fox Mountain and could walk from there to here in two strides, you'd still be measured by your soul

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

and not by your body. Hit's the lining of a man that counts."

It was late when they reached the little footway that cut off from the big road to Potts' store, and Becky was surprised when Bane struck into it suddenly. He was still angry, did not even tell her good-bye, and she stood looking after him with a heavy feeling in her heart. For she still believed she loved the man, and she was hurt to the core. She wondered what could be drawing him to Potts' store at that time of day. She did not know that lately, since the coming election was the topic of interest, most of the Smith contingent, now only half-hearted Morven haters, usually gathered there to discuss the matter. They were there when Bane walked up, and they were talking in loud, troubled voices.

"What's the matter?" asked Bane, with an assumption of surprise.

A man stepped forward. "Haven't you heard?" he asked.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Heard what?"

"That our cattle's about done for—the last dipping's fixed 'em."

Bane looked innocent, and felt harmless as aspirin. "You don't mean to say they're sick?"

"That's exactly what they are. Those cow doctors must have put too much poison in the water."

Bane looked down at the ground and appeared to think deeply for a moment, then he said, with an air of wisdom: "Yes; I think you're right. The solution in the water was too strong." And when no immediate reply came to this, he added: "I wonder what fool laws Morven'll interduce when he's elected senator?"

The man's eyes narrowed. "I don't reckon he'll be no senator."

The silence that fell over the group of men was broken by the sudden arrival of Mrs. Blufton, who was wringing her hands and

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

shrieking out the news that her cow had been poisoned at the vat. Mr. Potts, the good old storekeeper, did all he could to quiet her, for he feared her effect on the crowd, but she would not be silenced.

"Oh, what'll I, a poor widow woman, do ef my cow dies? Oh, what'll I do?"

"Don't take hit so to heart," begged Mr. Potts. "I allow hit's jest a slight spell that'll soon wear off." He went over to a shelf and got some stock powders and handed it to her. "This will help your cow," he said. "Give it a big dose tonight."

But she thrust the powders aside. Then, on second thought, she took the box from him and hastened home. It was one time in her life that she did not stop to gossip, for her cattle was all she had to depend on for a living, and she was justly concerned. Bane joined her as she walked up the hill.

"Yours is not the only cow that's sick," he told her. "Lots of 'em are."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

She did not slacken her pace. "Who else's are sick?" she asked.

"Mighty nigh everybody's down this end of the county, and I reckon those at Yellow Gold are done for too."

Her thoughts flashed to Morven, the man Halleluiah Givings admired. "Hit's about time you white men were settling that Indian blood," she commanded. "It's high time you were teaching him something."

A man walking up the road towards them heard what she said, and he carried her message on down to the men at the store:

"Hit's time to fix Morven!"

And Punk Smith's brother, remembering old accounts, took it up. "Hit's shore time somebody was a-doing something."

Bane appeared among them again. "How about fixin' him tonight," he said. "We white folks had better assert ourselves."

"You men had better go slow," warned Mr. Potts. "You can't swear that Morven's to

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

blame, besides, none of the cows is dead yet."

"But they're good as dead," fired Bane. "And Morven's got to tell us why he accepted graft money from those cow doctors for privileging them to operate the vat when nobody in the county wanted it."

"He didn't take no graft," flared the storekeeper.

"That shows what you know about it," returned Bane, with the air of one who knows. "Morven pays the doctors with the county's money, and they pay him. That's as easy as one and one."

A murmur rose up from the crowd. Bane was bending them to his way of thinking as easily as the wind bends a willow tree. What a little it takes to stir the passions of the unthinking! How slight is the thread that holds them bound to reason! And how strange it is that they never see through the motives of their leaders until it is too late. Here were these men, none of them really wicked at

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

heart, ready to listen to, to follow a man who had lain so long in the mire of hate that his whole soul and body had become saturated with it, past all cleansing. They would follow him blindly, and to the undoing of the best and cleanest man in their community—a man who meant more to them than they could ever guess.

"I—wouldn't be too hasty," pleaded Mr. Potts in a low, even voice. "I wouldn't be too hasty."

They jeered the good man.

"His pa killed Punk Smith," shouted Bane, determined to fan the flame all he could.

"Shore," answered Punk's brother. "And Potts can't deny that, can he?"

"I reckon not," answered Bane. "Come on, men!"

Sticks, clubs, bottles, pistols, guns—any weapon they could grasp—they took and started off, marching silently, doggedly over the highway to Morven's home. They were

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

thirsting for the blood of Archie Morven's grandson, and Jades Bane's grandson was leading them!

Though Becky Smith heard the silent marching of the men as they passed down the road near her house, she did not guess where they were going, and they were nearly a mile away when her mother came in from a neighbor's house and told her what the trouble was.

Becky's face turned deathly. "Why, Ma, you don't mean to say that Lemme Bane is leading the men folks ag'in Mr. Morven because the cows took sick?" she gasped.

"That's what he's a-doing."

"You don't reckon they're aiming to hurt Mr. Morven?"

"'Pears mighty like hit."

Without waiting for another word, Becky darted out into the night. Far ahead of her the small army of men marched on. They had reached that part of the road that lay above the falls. The sound of the falling

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

water had no power to soothe them; they were not to be soothed tonight—their hearts were full of passion's call. They had no ears for nature's music. Vengeance was the only song they heeded. The moon was out now, and it gazed sorrowfully down on the passion-gripped throng. Soft cloud-shadows hovered over its broad face, for it was a peculiarly sad and weird scene for the moon to witness. It was a scene the beamy one did not like. Lovers in each other's arms was what it liked to behold; not this.

When Becky reached the new highway, she went to the very edge of the road and suddenly dropped down onto a little trail that led in the direction of the falls. This path was very wet and slippery, but she bounded along with the confidence of one who knew its every turn. Finally she came to a wagon road which lay halfway between the highway and the river, running parallel with the river. It was the old wagon road that had been used before the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

highway was built, and it was a much shorter route to Yellow Gold. The dense trees down there cut the moon's light away from Becky, but she drove on courageously, her good mission preserving her from the wild things of the night.

A good way along the road she came to Coonee Latee's old home, but she made no glance in its direction tonight—just spun on past as if she were afraid of its darkness. After a while she faltered at the top of a rise in the road to catch her breath, and in the pause she distinctly could hear the rattle of a snake's buttons. A creepy feeling came over her and she sped on her way once again, thanking the moon for her narrow escape. She wondered if she would reach her destination in time—before those others got there. She began to worry, for the dense shadows kept her from traveling fast.

Another time she had to stop for breath, and now she felt another pang of fear, though it

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

was not a snake this time. It was the slow, steady footfalls of a man walking on the road ahead of her that caused the blood to quit her heart. She wondered who could be walking down that isolated path at that hour of night. Her heart seemed to stand still, for the portentous monotony of the man's tread frightened her so that she was afraid to breathe lest he should hear her and turn back. What was she to do? The suspense was awful. She clasped her hands over her heart to stop its thumping. Then suddenly it occurred to her that those men on the highway above were gaining on her every second that she stood there. If she did not hurry on they would get to Morven's before she did. And yet, in spite of everything, she could not move. The cold, white-boned hand of fear held her in its clammy grip!

## CHAPTER XII

It had been an exciting day for the people of Yellow Gold and the surrounding mountains, as Col. Brock, Morven's opponent, had driven over to the nearest railroad town for a moving picture machine and a man to operate it, and had come back to show a film that had been staged at a neighboring gold mine. As some of the Yellow Gold girls had posed in the picture they naturally were very excited and anxious to see it on the screen, and also felt very grateful to Col. Brock for the treat he was affording them. And he had not only invited the town people to witness the picture, but had hurried messengers out to the mountains to round up the backwoods folk, as he was especially anxious for them to see it, and they seemed quite as eager as he, for they

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

came in droves—no fiddling contest had ever drawn larger attendance. The courthouse was filled to overflowing.

The picture was in the midst of its first scene when Mrs. Crill and Morven arrived. Pamelie Hanks and Halleluiah Givings were playing a very pretty accompaniment to it on their fiddles—they had practiced together quite often since the arrival of Pamelie's new instrument, and Halleluiah could now play a large number of pieces.

The film portrayed the story of an Indian breed's love for a pretty white girl, and Morven was keenly interested from the very beginning. As the picture progressed, the operator began to explain:

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said in a long-drawn, monotonous voice, "notice the little lady in the left background of the following scene. That's Dora Derkins, of Yellow Gold. Though she was merely put there to fill in space, she's so pretty you'll clean overlook the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

leading lady who is in the act of allowing the halfbreed to kiss her lily-white hand."

A murmur of amusement ran through the crowd, for, to be sure, there stood Dora Derkins in the picture, looking just as natural as if she were about to speak. And the real Dora in the audience felt a little thrill of pleasure run through her, for Dora had never realized before half how pretty she really was. The onlookers applauded freely; then the operator drew in a deep breath and sent forth another chant:

"In the crowd of dancers in the next scene you'll observe the lovely countenances of the rest of the girls."

Pamelie and Halleluiah struck up a lively dance tune, and the spectators laughed boisterously. They were so absorbed in the pursuit of their faces on the screen that they did not see the hero plant a lingering kiss on the leading lady's very lips. In all that throng, Morven was the only one who saw that im-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

passioned caress, and it made him think of the time he had held Bevill in his arms and kissed her. His face glowed a little at the recollection, his steady, dark eyes got that far-away look in them again. How much like his own story the picture was, though, of course, he was not as much of an Indian as the man in the play. The plot ran along smoothly until it reached the climax, and then Morven's breath came in quick, painful gasps—for the play was ending sadly—the lovers were being parted forever.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," continued the man at the machine, "you'll observe that the picture is ended; that the beautiful white girl did not, could not, marry the Indian breed, which only goes to prove that white blood and copper were never meant to mingle!" A deep silence followed this speech, but he cleared his throat and kept on: "I have a real surprise for you folks. The movie men caught some pictures of some of you unawares, and

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

he sent the film back as a compliment to you for your services in the foregoing picture." He paused and coughed once more. "In the picture I'm about to throw on the screen, you'll see Col. Brock in the act of talking politics with a crowd of men in front of Potts' cross-roads store."

For a fact, there stood Col. Brock at the place mentioned, talking with a number of mountaineers who were laughing good-naturedly. That is, all except one, and that was Lemme Bane who was frowning terribly as he came out of the store with a bottle in his hand. His face was the picture of all that was dark and evil.

"Did you notice that fellow with the bottle?" asked the operator. "Well, his expression didn't indicate that the bottle contained corn liquor, did it?"

The audience roared loudly at this, especially the mountain men, though little did they suspect what really was in the bottle. Per-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

haps Mr. Potts could have told them, for surely he had not forgotten, even though Bane had purchased it early in the summer.

A real shock came to Morven and his friends and political supporters when suddenly a picture of Morven was thrown before the startled spectators, a picture of him seated in his automobile, with Bevill Brown at his side, looking up into his eyes and smiling sweetly. Morven gripped the arm of his chair as he gazed ahead of him, streaks of white slashed the red of his face. The operator sang out:

"The man who took the picture said it was too lovely to resist. And besides, he couldn't help it, as he was upon the hillside taking views of the falls when the couple hove into sight. But, like the story just shown, this couple has also parted, because, as I've explained before, white blood and copper were never intended to mix—in love or politics!"

Pamelie and Halleluiah brought their music to a sudden climax, as Morven, white and

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

trembling, rose to his feet and started towards the man at the machine. His friends crowded around him suddenly and pushed him back.

"Don't blame Brock's hireling!" they urged. "Brock paid him to say it, and you can see he's none too bright."

Morven's quick eyes caught the simple expression on the operator's face, and in the bigness of his nature he pitied the weakling.

"You're right," he said calmly, "Brock is the only one to blame." He looked around the crowd carefully. But Brock was nowhere to be seen.

While Morven's friends had been trying to pacify him, the mountaineers were cheering the movie operator to the limit of their lungs, the air vibrated with their noise. And now, as they spied Pamelie and Halleluiaah going up the aisle towards the door, they howled after them:

"Don't quit, girls, the show's not over yet,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

and the pictures don't run smooth without your music."

Halleluiahs stopped short, halfway up the aisle, and her voice was low and trembling when she spoke:

"Col. Brock is giving you folks this show, an' ef he'd a-been square, he'd a told me and Pamelie he was aimin' to use us as tools to help him in his campaign ag'in Mr. Morven."

The tears rolled down her cheeks as she followed Pamelie out of the door without waiting to hear the applause that arose from Morven's supporters. Jim was already out of the building and waiting for them in the square.

"You're quick, Halleluiahs," he ventured, when they were at last on their way home. "You ought not have spoke out like that."

"It came afore I knowed it," she trembled. "An' now I reckon them edicated folks of Yellow Gold air laughing at me. But my mind wasn't on them—hit was on them bush-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

wackers that was laughing so loud. I reckon them Yellow Gold folks think I'm crazy."

Jim drew himself up.

"No, they don't. Most of them are Morven's friends. Brock's little play was for the mountaineers."

Pamelie shifted her violin. "But you left them something to think about, Halleluiah. Being a back-woodser yourself, they understood your language. And there's no doubt about your makin' Col. Brock's scheme plain to them. They might have howled an' roared, but most of them are good men, and they won't stand for anything that's underhanded. Col. Brock'll see his mistake, yet."

"He shorely will," agreed Jim. "Those men'll sleep over what Halleluiah said and then vote for the decent man in the race. Halleluiah don't spurt out so mighty often, but when she does she has a knack of slapping words together that makes 'em count."

But Halleluiah was still crying softly.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Youn's air jest trying to comfort me, I know, and hit's mighty good of ye. But I made a spectickle of myself afore all those Yellow Gold folks—they laughed at me, and you know it."

After that a deep silence fell over them.

Back in the courthouse another picture was thrown on the screen and under it was a super-scription begging the people to vote for Col. Brock, a man whose ancestors were pure, unadulterated white, even to the fiftieth generation. And Morven, who was still present, clenched his hands and the danger color came to his face once more, but he remained strangely silent, not a sound escaped him. With all the fire of the red man's nature he longed to fight somebody, his arms ached from suppressed blows, but he controlled his passion as only a strong man could. Fight was fiercer within him that moment than it had ever been, but the mental and moral strength

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

of him predominated his pugilistic impulse, for though he was a splendid specimen of the red man's leather-fibered, well-developed muscles, his real power lay within his white man's mentality; so he just sat there cold and never once lost their sureness.

After a while Mrs. Crill, who was nervously alive to the possibilities of what might happen silent, gazing ahead of him with eyes that should any more insults be flung at Morven, put her hand on his arm and begged him to take her home. And he, always solicitous to the comfort of his first loyal friend, acquiesced instantly. It was not yet nine o'clock when they got in the automobile and started home. And the moon was shining brightly down on them.

"That was unfair of Brock," Mrs. Crill said after a while.

He smiled. "All's fair in politics, you know."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"But it ought not to be," she answered seriously.

He was silent for a long time, thinking of Bevill, wondering if anyone had told her of his Indian ancestors. He wondered if a few drops of Indian blood could make such a difference with her? Could the fact that he was Coonee Latee's grandson prove a discouragement to the girl he loved. A proud gleam shot into his eye. His grandmother had been a very superior woman? He smiled at the mere thought of her. He turned suddenly to Mrs. Crill.

"Do you think the picture we saw tonight ended well—the first picture?"

She shook her head. "Not to me. I never like to see lovers separated, even for a good reason, let alone a foolish one."

He was thoughtful for a moment. "But the mixing of the breeds seems to be a very serious question," he observed.

"Yes; I know; but the man in the picture

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

wasn't a full-blooded Indian; he was only half."

He frowned. "Do you suppose Bevill found out I was a quarterbreed? I never thought to tell her."

She hesitated for a moment. "Yes; she found it out the day before she left."

He looked surprised. "Who told her?" he asked quickly.

"Halleluiah Givings accidentally let it drop."

A peculiar smile drew along his mouth. "And I suppose that's why she became frightened and ran away."

"Not that altogether—she made Becky Smith tell her what it was her folks had against you."

"She did?"

"Yes. And Becky told her, though she didn't much want to."

Then Mrs. Crill was silent for a long time, and Morven said to her:

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Don't mind telling me how Bevill received the shock. I want to know everything."

But Mrs. Crill remained silent.

"Please tell me," he begged. "No matter what it is, it won't hurt."

She smiled nervously. "Well, Halleluiah said Miss Bevill took on mighty bad about you being the quarterbreed son of a man who had committed a murder. Said it seemed to upset her terribly."

His face grew paler and paler in the blue-white light of the moon, and Mrs. Crill's hand reached up to pat his back affectionately. Many a time before had she given him that encouraging little bracer.

"Don't let it worry you, my boy, and don't feel hard towards Becky and Halleluiah. They didn't want to tell her."

He smiled sadly. "I don't blame them," he said. "It is well they told her. She had to learn it sooner or later."

The thought of Bevill's casting him aside for

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

what she believed was his father's sin, proved to him that she had never really cared for him. He was merely her mountain toy with which to while away a few summer hours. The kisses she had permitted him were only a part of her game. He bit his lips. No; he could not believe that of her. She had loved him when she allowed his kisses. It was the sudden knowledge of his father's crime, of his Indian blood that changed her. He bowed his head. It was hard, hard! Fate had exercised superfluous cruelty towards him, he thought. And what had he ever done to deserve it!

## CHAPTER XIII

"Is that you, Jim?"

Becky Smith at last summoned courage to address the man on the trail ahead of her. He stopped suddenly at the sound of her voice, and faced her. She went a little nearer, so that she could get a better view of his face, which looked strangely familiar to her in the dim light of the moon.

"Who are youn's?" she repeated. The look of fear in her face had changed to one of confidence.

"I'm Peck, the man who was prospecting around here last week," he replied as he strained his eyes to make out the lines of her girlish figure.

She drew a sigh of relief. "How come you back?" she asked in soft-toned surprise.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

He laughed. "I hardly know myself. Just kinder felt something drawing me back against my will. 'Twas the gold, I suppose."

She darted along the path with a sudden new energy. He took long strides to keep up with her.

"What's your hurry?" he asked.

She told him.

He looked unconvinced. "You don't mean to say that Bane poisoned the cattle and is leading the men against Morven?" he gasped.

"Yes," she panted. "I saw him pouring the stuff in the creek with my own two eyes, and I drove Ma's cows out afore they got any."

"How'd you know it was poison?"

She slackened into a walk, and pressed her hand against her side to ease the pain in it. "All the cows are sick save ours, and I allow hit's because ours didn't drink from the creek."

His face cleared. "I suppose this trouble is

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

what was drawing me back, and I thought it was the gold."

She was breathing hard. Peck looked at her sharply.

"Is Bane the man you're engaged to—the one you love?"

A grim smile curved her lips. "He's the man I thought I loved, but that's past life with me now. My love for him is as dead as last year's autumn leaves."

Last year's autumn leaves and dead limbs crackled under their feet.

"I thought you were too fine a girl to waste your life on such a scamp," he said. In all his forty-five years, that was the nearest he had ever come to paying a woman a compliment.

The color flowed into her cheeks, for there was something in the voice of the man that attracted her. "I reckon it was Lemme's fine clothes and big size that caught me for the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

time being. His body and the way he rigged it got me afore I knowed it."

"You're not the only person that's been trapped by fine trappings. In big cities, where there are no flower-scented wood-trails to help Cupid along, he has to depend a great deal on rich toggery and powder puffs."

After that they walked and ran through the night in silence, and though Becky was making a brave fight to hold out, the pain in her heart from the intensity of her pace, began to get the better of her after a while and she was forced to drop down on a log to rest. Peck made a motion to sit down beside her, but she urged him frantically to hurry on.

"Every second counts," she pleaded, "every little bit of a second. You go on and stop the men from hurting Mr. Morven, and I'll come along after a while."

He was on his way before she had finished. "You're not afraid?" he called back to her.

"Only afraid of what'll happen if you don't

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

hurry," she replied in a low voice, full of dread significance. "Oh, please, please hurry!"

Peck made no further remark. The business of going forward absorbed him completely.

Over at Fox Mountain, the crowd had already reached Morven's home, and he had come out on the porch to talk to them. His splendid form was drawn to its fullest height, his dark eyes were looking straight at them, his voice was very cool and steady.

"I am not responsible for your sick cattle," he said, "and the man who says I am is either ignorant or malicious."

"Huh!" cried a man from the rear of the crowd. "Did the rest of you catch that word. Ignorant! Won't you listen to the smart Indian?"

Bane stepped forward and leered in his face. "I might be ignorant," he said. "but I

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

got sense enough to know you're accepting graft money from those cow doctors."

The man from the rear hurled forward and stepped upon the porch. "I reckon you'll admit you grafted when the rope's around your neck." This man had ten sick cows at home.

White and impassioned beyond all control, Morven lunged at Bane's throat and held it in a deathlike grip. "All of this agitation against me is due to your hatred, Bane, and I've a mind to choke the life out of you," he cried. "You—"

He did not finish—a rock sang through the air and landed against his forehead with such violence as to knock him to the floor.

"Guess that'll silence the Indian for a while," cried the hoarse voice of the man who had thrown it.

Slowly, weakly, the blood streaming from his temple, Morven rose to his feet once again and faced his persecutors. "Don't think I'm ashamed to be called an Indian," he said

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

calmly, wiping the crimson from his face. "If you blood-thirsty creatures standing before me are representative of two thousand years of civilization, then I thank God for the few drops of savage blood that flow in my veins."

Another rock, landing on his head, whirled him into silence for a moment, as white and sick from the pain of it, he staggered backward, holding his hand against the large lump it had raised.

"I guess that'll stop your flow of language," yelled this second stone-hurler.

Morven uttered no sound to let his tormentors know how intensely he was suffering, but his head drooped in spite of his effort to keep it erect.

"Behold the mighty Morven," joked Bane. "Come on boys and help me finish him!"

The brother of Punk Smith was the first to move forward. "I reckon it's high time my brother's blood was avenged," he thundered as he took hold of Morven's arm. He and

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Bane were dragging Morven down the steps a moment later.

"Come on and lend your hands," they urged the others.

But the others held back, motionless. For the first time since they had started out on their man-hunt, they seemed to realize the enormity of the crime they were about to perpetrate. They were suddenly under the sway of conscience. Only the two stone-slingers were determined to stand by Bane to the end.

"Come on!" cried the disgusted Bane, as he viewed the crowd. "Are you going to be a passel of balkers?"

"Well, I reckon hit's better to balk than to be too quick about sich matters," drawled a big man near the front, biting desperately into a plug of tobacco. "Morven had a powerful straight look in his eyes when he faced us a while ago. And maybe, after all, he ain't responsible for the sick cattle."

Bane and the other two were on the ground

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

with their man, dragging, half-carrying him along, the dark blood covering the palor of his face from them. He was limp, scarcely breathing now, but suddenly he drew a long breath, opened his eyes in a dazed manner and looked around. He was too weak to offer any resistance to the men who pinioned his arms and dragged him along; he remained calm and silent in their grasp, the victim of Lemme Bane's cruel, treacherous heart. The other men followed slowly, victims also of Bane's, much more to be pitied victims than the man they were about to undo.

All sorts of visions floated before Morven's hazy mind; but they were beautiful visions—the kind that would haunt a clean man in the face of death: Coonee Latee, the glorious little princess, danced along in front of him strewing gold nuggets in his pathway, and as she danced she sang a low, sweet Indian melody which thrilled him with a wonderful happiness. And Bevill Brown's beautiful face ap-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

peared before him, smiling, flowing with love. Oh, what wonderful eyes hers were as they looked at him with the expression they had worn the day he kissed her. He held out his arms to her and murmured in a low, husky voice:

"Here goes the last of the Mocking Bird's breed, little girl!"

Then he closed his eyes and fell limply against the men who were supporting him.

Little girl! Were those to be his last words?

They stopped beneath a crooked tree with him.

"Come on!" cried Bane's froggy voice. For though the crowd had followed, they were still reluctant.

Only silence answered the wicked man's call.

"Balkers!" sneered Bane. "Balkers!"

This roused them a trifle, and they moved nearer, surrounding the tree. Then in the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

sway of another deep silence, a man's voice rang out from the forest back of them:

"Men!"

That was all—men. And the person who had called must have been some distance away, for the voice had sounded far off. But there was a stern and dread solemnity in the tone that pierced their vengeful mood, as easily as it had pierced the night air, and they stood motionless under its strange spell.

Men! It was an appeal to their manhood, and most of them had some degree of that—only the three holding Morven seemed utterly devoid of the least trace of it. They were the real dark souls of the group, those three, and they had no hearts to listen to the voice from the forest.

Bane, determined to finish his rival, drew a rope around his neck, slung one end of it over a limb, and commanded the men to swing onto it. And the two nearest him made a move to obey, when suddenly as a cyclone

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

cuts its way through dense forest trees, Peck pushed through the throng of men and hurled Bane and his two helpers backward with powerful, swinging blows.

But this intrusion only served to arouse the others from their trancelike quietude, and they surged forward to assist Bane and the other two men Peck was fighting. Peck tried to explain, but the mob was beyond listening to him now—they were going to finish his friend, and he was helpless to relieve the situation. A dozen brawny hands reached towards the rope; but simultaneously with this movement, the wood around them suddenly burst into a circle of flames, a circle that was complete save for a little opening to the north. And the fire was so intense from the very beginning, licking up into the tall, low-sapped trees, spreading along the leafy, dead-limb-covered ground, that the crowd became panic stricken and sought safety through the narrow outlet, leaving only Peck to grasp Morven in his arms and

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

plunge through the flames in an opposite direction. It was a risk to go that way, but hell fire itself was preferable to the fumes of a blood-crazed mob, he thought.

On and on he pushed through the dense forest outside the fire's bounds, and it was not until he came to a soft little bed of moss a quarter mile away, that he laid down his burden and tied a handkerchief around his bleeding head. A high wind was sweeping the fire in the direction the mob had taken, and he was thankful for that. What had caused it, he wondered. What a terrible thing it was from the start, and how completely it consumed the growth in its path. And as he kept his solemn watch over his friend, the whole heavens seemed to glow with its reflection. Suddenly he began to worry about Becky Smith. Why had she not come upon the scene. Perhaps she had fainted away back there on the trail.

Morven stirred uneasily where he lay and

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

opened his eyes. When he saw Peck's bearded face outlined against the fire's glow, he made no show of recognition—memory of everyone had left him. That is, memory of all save the city girl and his little Indian grandmother. They were the only ones who lingered with him, and they must have been pleasant companions, judging from the smile that played around his mouth. No wonder he smiled, for he was living over the time Bevill had lain against his heart; he was breathing the sweet perfume of her hair, feeling the thrilling warmth of her kiss. Had those men of a while ago succeeded in carrying out their intentions, he would have gone on through eternity living his love for her over and over. Those men could have destroyed his body, but they could not have put an end to his love—God had given him that to keep, even through the forever. And what greater peace could heaven offer any soul than to let it love on through eternity? And be loved!

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Only once did he show any sign of the sore trial he had just been through, and then he mumbled brokenly:

"I'm flying . . . a thousand Egypts . . . a thousand Niles . . ."

Though Peck could not make out what he was trying to say, it was a fragment from an old Antar poem that flitted through his wandering mind:

" 'I am flying far from thee to a distance of a thousand years, each a thousand leagues in length. Though you would bestow on me a thousand Egypts, each watered by a thousand Niles, I should prefer going far from thee, for a man should fly from a region where barbarism reigns.' "

How singularly appropriate it was to his present occasion for he had come to feel the meaning of every word that had been uttered by that poor, persecuted Kaher—words uttered in the very beginning days by a mortal

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

hounded by his fellow beings. Oh, what slow-moving machinery is that thing called civilization!

The smile had never left Morven's face while he repeated the lines of the poem, for visions of Bevill's face remained with him, her arms seemed to be around his neck. And when Peck saw the smile, his hopes rose, for surely no man could smile like that with death upon him. Peck felt Morven's pluse—it was normal, the intense quickness of it had slowed down, just as the fire which had at last reached the creek bottom, was dying away. Just as the terrible wrath of the mob was cooling, ever cooling.

Suddenly three female forms, and a man's, appeared between Peck and the fire's fading glow, and they were moving along in a noiseless, phantomlike way towards him. Slowly, like returned spirits of old Cherokee, they glided onward, and, Peck, thinking perhaps they were straying members of the mob, caught Morven up in his arms again and started off.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

But he stopped suddenly when the sound of Halleluiah Givings' voice struck on his ears, allaying all evil presages.

"Where'd you put them gasoline cans, Jim?" she asked in a low, hushed voice. "They are Mr. Morven's, and it wouldn't do to lose 'em."

"I reckon they're burnt up," returned Jim, regretfully. "I slung 'em down attar I was through emptying 'em."

"Why, Jim!"

"I wasn't thinking what I did. What'd you do with the ones you had?"

"Me and Pamelie and Mrs. Crill throwed ours in the fire to help it along. But they was our'n, and we don't have to bother about them."

Then Mrs. Crill spoke up: "You don't have to bother about Mr. Morven's either; I guess he'd a-been more'n willing to donate them to our cause." Then she added in an anxious voice: "Are you sure it was Mr. Peck that carried off my boy, Jim?"

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Yes, quite sure. He cotched him up in his arms afore I got to him, and he must have struck out smack through the flames, because I didn't see him following me. This here's the direction he must have took."

Peck had laid Morven on the moss once more, and now his sonorous voice rang low:

"Here I am, Jim, with Morven. Go git a doctor quick as your long legs can carry you."

Frightened almost dumb at first, Mrs. Crill, Halleluiah, Pamelie and Jim stood dead still, staring into the shadows from whence the voice had emerged.

"Go get the doctor, Jim—don't stand there gapping," commanded Peck. "And the others of you come on and help me get this man in the house."

Mrs. Crill was the first to reach the place where Morven lay. She fell on her knees beside him, stretched her arms heavenward, breathed her prayer of thanks; then laid her withered hand on his throbbing temple and

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

sobbed. The sturdy Westerner, Pamelie and Halleluiah looked down on her for a second, and the man from the West shook his head solemnly:

"Those beasts mighty near finished him," he said in a deep, troubled voice. "One of you girls run down the old chasm trail a ways and look for Becky Smith—she gave out on the way—and the others of you help me with this poor fellow."

Halleluiah's face brightened a little. "Becky didn't give out for long—she's over there in the cornfield this very minute a-talking to the mob crowd."

"What's she saying to them?" Peck wanted to know.

"We uns were too far to make out her words, but she's holding those men under some kind of a spell, for they're drinking in every word she's saying. She's pouring it down their throats easier than a mother pours soothing syrup down a baby's. Lemme Bane, the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

leader, is the only one that's not staying to hear it all. We seed him flying through the woods like the very hornets were after him."

Peck smiled weakly. "No wonder he's running. Becky saw him pouring poison into the creek."

Mrs. Crill, who was still crying softly over Morven, raised up. "I guess that's what Becky's telling the men," she said.

Peck had Morven up in his arms and was making his way slowly through the forest before he answered. "Yes, that's what she's telling them."

An hour later, Morven was lying on his bed and the doctor was dressing his wounds, when several of the mob men, accompanied by Becky Smith, came in to offer their apologies to Mrs. Crill and the others who had stood so staunchly by their friend.

"The Lord was with us tonight, that we was saved from making such a horrible mistake,"

## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**

they offered in solemn voices. "If it hadn't been for that fire a-breakin' out when it did, we'd a finished our gruesome task."

Halleluiah smiled a pitiful little smile. "Yes, I've allus knowed fire's the powerfulllest distractor there is," she said in a low voice.

## CHAPTER XIV

As Morven lay hovering between life and death he never lacked for friends—Mrs. Crill and Peck stayed at his bedside most of the time, only allowing themselves to rest when Halleluiah and Jim came over to relieve them. Pamelie Hanks and Becky Smith drove in twice a week to offer their services, and most of the people of Yellow Gold showed their sympathy in various ways. Even the men who had tried so hard to rob him of his young life seemed very solicitous about him. Their regret was from the bottom of their hearts, especially since Lemme Bane had been caught, had confessed, and was safely in jail awaiting trial.

Gradually the fever left Morven, his reason returned, and he was at last able to sit up. He was well on his way to recovery the day

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

the election rolled around, and his supporters were confident he would win. But somehow he had not given much thought to politics during his recuperating period—he had just sat at the window day after day thinking of Bevill, wondering if she had heard of his illness, and if she cared. He would gaze out to the sleeping valley—the trees were bare of all foliage now, as winter's hand had at last touched the mountains—and imagine he could see her walking along the little path she had trod that day she visited his home.

It was the day of the election that he sat at the window until the moon began to rise in the east; but even at that late hour he showed no sign of interest in the outcome of his race. His more immediate concern was the moon, for he was wondering if it shone as beautifully where Bevill lived. While he was thinking, the note of a mocking bird in the tree outside his window caused a creepy little chill to run through his body. The warm night

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

had deceived the little songster into thinking it was summer, for the air was soft and balmy, with that winter-warmth peculiar to extreme southern portions of the Blue Ridge, the warmth that not only betrays birds, but which also entices frogs into croaking their summer croaks only to hide away again when a sudden cold snap strikes them.

Trill—ll—!

The mocking bird was beginning its ascending song, and its notes held the man at the window with a fascination he could not resist. He strained his eyes to watch it mount the tree to the very tip-top where it sat pouring its sweet, sky-piercing music through the air.

Trill—Caw—Gurgle!

It was in a mocking humor tonight, trying to make believe the woods were full of the migratory birds that had long since departed to tropical forests. It whistled a red bird's shrill song, a wood finch's melody, a brown thrush's warble, an indigo bird's flute song.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Oh, what a lyrical, rhythmical, summery mood it was in; what a trembling, wavering, cooing love poem it was—how wildly happy in its playlike summer, how content to sit there and sing and sing. Some people called it American nightingale, but it should have been named the bird of hope.

Trill—ll—!

One more long-drawn whistling call and it flew off from where it sat into the beautiful moonlit sky, rising upward as it flew. And certain hopes that had been very low began to rise and fly with it, for now Morven's eyes glowed with a sudden new confidence of seeing Bevill again. Surely he would see her now. Had not the mocking bird encouraged him to hope? And seeing Bevill was about all he cared to hope for. He smiled sadly. All his life he had heard people say something about little birds that told them news, but he had not known until now that the adage originated with his grandmother's race. The thrill of the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

song he had just heard continued to run through his mind, soothing it. It was as a portion of febrifuge to his love-fevered soul; it was the medicine that was to make him well; for at last the superstition of his ancestors had him in its sway.

Peck, who had gone over to Yellow Gold early in the morning, had not come home yet, and Becky Smith and Pamelie Hanks had come in to relieve Morven's loneliness. When Becky entered Morven's room, her eyes wandered around restlessly, as if she were searching for someone.

"Oh, he's at the polls," smiled Morven, thinking it was Peck she wanted.

She blushed faintly.

"I reckon you think you're onto my heart, but I wasn't lookin' for Mr. Peck."

His brows lifted. She glanced at the others who had followed her into the room.

"It ain't him that's bothering me right now.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

I—have something else I want to tell you," she said.

Mrs. Crill and Pamelie took the gentle hint and departed in an easy, unnoticeable little way. When they were gone Morven's eyes sought Becky questioningly.

"I've a letter from Miss Bevill to show you," she explained, drawing it from her pocket and handing it to him. "She's just heard about your trouble."

His hands trembled as he reached out for it, trembling from the very hunger that was consuming his poor tired heart. And as he devoured the lines, desperately as a starving man devours food, the tears rose to his eyes and coursed down his pale cheeks. Oh, how sweet it was to be allowed to read her writing once again, and as he read it over, the blood dropping away from his heart as he read, then surging back to it again, he wondered how he could keep on loving her when she had told him she could never marry him. Why was it

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

so hard to control his heart where she was concerned? Each word of the letter seemed to flicker before him like a conglomeration of moons, stars, suns, dancing about in the heavens in wild confusion, especially the words that read:

"I am so sorry to hear of Mr. Morven's trouble, Becky, and I just cannot get him out of my thoughts. I haven't slept one wink since reading your letter. Please, please remember me to him when he is able to see you, and tell him I am praying for his speedy recovery."

Becky saw the light in his eyes as he read, and thinking he wanted to be alone with his thoughts, she tip-toed out of the room and joined Mrs. Crill and Pamelie.

Morven sat there for a long time dreaming over the letter in his hand, and while he realized it contained nothing that indicated Bevill cared for him as he wanted her to care, still he felt

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

a little encouraged. He closed his eyes, then suddenly, in the soft quietude of the mountains, a wonderful new peace came over him, and he slept.

He was awakened an hour later by the heavy tramping of men on the porch. The sound of voices came to him:

"Hurrah for Senator Morven! Hurrah!"

As the men plunged into the room, he smiled and made an effort to rise, but the firm hand of Peck held him down. So he was forced to thank them in the silent language of a sick man's eyes, but that was sufficient. It spoke the heart of him to his friends better than mere words could have spoken, and they were satisfied.

It was late when they at last left him, so late that Peck was compelled to drive Becky Smith home, as he feared for her to travel so far alone, though he knew very well that Becky was accustomed to travelling at night — she had no fear of the woods after dark, as she

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

had proved the night she took the chasm trail to Yellow Gold. It was anything for an excuse to accompany her, with Peck, and she was only too glad to accept his protection, as a real love was on the verge of entering her life—not the make-believe kind she had felt for Lemme Bane.

The world could add nothing to the happiness of those two as they drove along the highway that night behind Becky's slow-moving old horse, but even the deliberate pace seemed to please them.

"It's a romantic highway," Peck said finally.

They were above the falls now.

She smiled a little.

"Yes; but it's a dangerous one, especially to men that's been drinking wine. One or two muddle-headed ones have tumbled over the edge and received awful injuries."

He gazed out across the chasm, then back into her eyes.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"But it's even more dangerous to sober men," he said thoughtfully.

She threw him a questioning glance.

He smiled boyishly. "Sober men are likely to suffer a greater fall—they're likely to fall in love."

She drew in a deep, quivering breath.

Then a peaceful silence fell over them as he caught her hand and held it, a silence as deep as the chasm itself. But there are moments when hearts are conversing, no matter how shut are the lips!

## CHAPTER XV.

The following afternoon found Morven seated by the window once again, with the letter Becky Smith had brought him still clasped in his hand. His face was pale and tired-looking as he meditated over the many changes that had come into his life during the past year. Much happiness had come to him, and much sorrow. But he was not censuring heaven for his sorrows today—was just thanking it for the brief period Bevill had filled his life, for the joy of having been allowed to hold her in his arms even for a short moment. He smiled sadly. One must be thankful for the sun even though it is not always to be seen.

The twilight shadows were falling over the mountains when Mrs. Crill came in to hand him another letter, and his heart suffered an-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

other tumult when he recognized the writing. He wondered why Bevill was writing to him. Thoughtful Mrs. Crill left him to read it alone, and he felt a sense of relief as he heard the door close behind her. His hands trembled so he could hardly open it, his breath came in short, quick gasps, little drops of moisture stood out on his forehead. He read:

“My dear Mr. Morven:—

Inasmuch as you gave me the pretty beaded head band, I feel it my duty to tell you of a dream I had concerning it. And though you will laugh at me perhaps for taking the matter so seriously, you will surely agree with me that the dream was at least unusual. I shall not go into elaborate detail, but shall try to tell you about it in as few words as possible:

A pretty little Indian girl who spoke of herself as your grandmother came to me and warned me very tragically against wearing the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

beads, and when I asked for her reason she began to sob pitifully:

'You danced the peak off of Fox Mountain last night, and soon the secret of Cherokee be faded away.'

I remembered that I had danced very hard the night preceding the dream, danced until the moisture of my brow had wet the lining of the head band I was wearing.

When I awoke the next morning I would have dismissed the dream from my thoughts altogether, but that little Indian had no idea of allowing me any peace until I had promised to deliver her message to you, for she came to me a second night, and a third, with the same story:

'The gold is in filled-in shaft under my grandson's house,' she kept repeating. 'It's in the heart of Fox Mountain.'

Now, the strangest part of it all is that I made a microscopical examination of the lining of the band, and found an obscure tracing of

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

a mountain and some kind of wild animal, which I presume was intended for a fox. And, weird as it may seem, the peak of the mountain had been completely crased!

Hoping you are fully recovered from your recent illness, for I have been very much worried about you, and that you may expound the dream to your real benefit and write me of the results of any investigation you might make, I am

Very sincerely your friend,

Bevill Brown."

As Morven finished reading, he leaned his head against the high-backed chair and thought of the dream he had had in the decaying little cabin home of his grandparents. How singular it was that Bevill's dream should tally with his so completely. He remembered how his dream had haunted him day and night for many weeks after it came to him, how the princess' soft voice had reproached him for having

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

parted with the ornament. He smiled. How queer it all was. Deep, thoughtful lines stretched along his forehead. What were dreams anyway, and why? They seemed to take possession of one's mind when it was helpless and carry it where they willed. He read the letter over again and again; then, putting his dream with Bevill's, he at last came to the conclusion that Connee Latee, of Cherokee, was doing all in her spirit power to tell him where the gold was buried, and that he would prove himself a dutiful grandson by beginning an immediate search for the treasure. Later, when Mrs. Crill and Peck were in the room, he read the letter to them.

"That's the strangest thing I ever heard of," breathed Mrs. Crill. "It's almost spooky how Miss Bevill's dream and yours agree on every point."

Peck's eyes expanded their limit. "I told you the gold was somewhere in this mountain," he said excitedly.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Morven shook his head. "It's only a dream after all," he answered.

"Yes; but the tribe of Cherokee were strong believers in dreams," reminded Mrs. Crill. "Ma said they were guided by their dreams in every important step they took."

Morven smiled as if still in doubt. "And I am of that tribe," he said.

"Yes; you're all that's left of the Mocking Bird's breed," she returned solemnly. "And the gold is rightfully yours."

But somehow Morven could not make himself believe in the dreams, and when Peck saw how little enthusiasm his friend was showing, he began to argue in a strong, virile, convincing manner:

"Little Indian Princesses don't leave Happy Hunting Grounds on wild goose chases because they are too well supplied with game where they are, and you may rest assured I'll follow that little woman's orders and start bur-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

rowing for that gold tomorrow, if her grandson gives me leave."

"You're foolish, Peck," smiled Morven. "It doesn't seem plausible that a man of your hard sense should lay such store by a dream."

Mrs. Crill looked at Morven. "I don't think he's foolish," she defended. "Not since I know about the dream Halleluiah Givings had once."

"Let us have it," urged Peck.

"Well it was sorter like this: Halleluiah dreamed she met a girl friend on the highway driving a wagon, and in the wagon was a coffin—it was a black one with silver handles. Well, as Halleluiah hadn't seen the girl in many, many years, she was naturally surprised to meet her in that particular spot, and so she said to her: 'What in the world are you doing here in this part of the world, when I thought you were in California?' And the girl pointed to the coffin and said, 'Oh, I just came back home to bury poor little me—didn't you know I died when I was ten years old, and nobody's

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

buried me yet?' And will you believe it when I tell you that one month from that day that very girl returned suddenly to the mountains and was spending the day at Halleluiah's home, when Halleluiah's brother came in from the field and dropped dead at the girl's feet. And it was the girl herself that drove the wagon to the city for the coffin, unbeknownst to Halleluiah, and fetched back a black one with silver handles, exactly like the one Halleluiah had seen in her dream."

Peck turned to Morven. "How about that?" he asked.

"But the girl didn't bury herself," smiled Morven.

"No; but she afterwards said that she had loved Halleluiah's brother ever since she was ten years old; that she had hardly been herself since; that her very soul had seemed merged into his; that she had felt him drawing her back to the mountains, and that was why she returned so unexpectedly."

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Then Peck put in:

"And if that doesn't convince you; listen to this:

"I once knew a girl named Mary, who was made miserable over the fact that her best friend, Emma, unjustly accused her of flirting with her husband, who it seems had been receiving letters from a woman whose writing and Mary's were identical. And though Mary tried to explain her innocence, and the husband in the case did all he could to relieve Mary of the blame, at the same time refusing to give the other woman's name, an estrangement between Mary and her friend followed. Then one day, after several long years had passed, Mary fell asleep in the sitting-room and dreamed that Emma came to her and begged forgiveness for having wronged her, admitting she had made a terrible mistake and that she now knew for a fact that Mary did not write the letters. Mary awoke thinking of the dream, and wondering what it meant.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Three nights in succession she dreamed the same thing, and this at last caused her to write Emma a letter. It was while she was seated at her desk that the phone rang. And she answered it to learn it was Emma's husband who wanted to speak with her. And when Mary asked him about Emma, he informed her that Emma had been dead three weeks. And when he added that he was sorry for the trouble that had separated the two friends, Mary only said, 'Oh, Emma knows for a fact now that I did not write the letters.' "

Morven laughed.

Mrs. Crill's eyes were full of interest.

Peck shifted his position.

"And here's another," he went on:

"A man I know dreamed he was looking through an old Bible and found a hundred dollar greenback. He laughed and told his wife about it the next morning, with the result that while he was at work she went through the pages of every old Bible in the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

house. But unfortunately she was disappointed. Again and again the man dreamed of the money in the old book, and again and again he spoke of the dreams to his wife. Then, after many days had passed and the dream did not come to him again, he let it from his mind and never thought of it again until one day, exactly a year from the day he had first dreamed of the money, he was in another part of the country visiting a distant relative. And this relative, a young woman, said to him in the course of the evening's conversation, 'Do you know, the day before Mother died, a year ago, one of the tenants on the farm came to see her and paid her a hundred dollar bill for rent, and, though I have searched the house high and low, through every box and bank, I have never been able to find out what she did with that money.'

" 'Are you sure the tenant paid it to her,' he asked. 'Yes, for Mother tried to tell me where she had hidden it just before she died.'

"He saw an old Bible on the under-shelf of

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

a table which sat in a corner. He walked over to it and opened it, running his fingers through the pages carefully. He was not surprised to at last come across the money, for already he had recognized the Bible of his dreams."

"Did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Crill. "Wasn't that strange?"

Morven smiled.

"Well, that settles it; we'll begin digging for that gold tomorrow."

"Do you mean it?" asked Peck quickly.

"Yes; you have my permission to tear away at your work right away, though I would request you not to remove the house until I can get out."

"It won't be necessary to move the house. I can dig into the old shaft from behind it."

Mrs. Crill eyed them searchingly.

"Are you two men in earnest?"

For a moment only silence answered her. One man was down in a pit digging for gold; the other was in an automobile spinning along a silver-lighted highway, with a pretty young

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

girl at his side. Oh, visions! Sustaining nourishment for starving hopes. How welcome your intrusion, always!

"I say," repeated Mrs. Crill. "Are you two in sure enough, no-fooling earnest?"

"Yes"; replied Peck gravely. "I'll begin digging first thing in the morning."

And after Mrs. Crill and Peck had quitted the room, Morven got the encyclopedia, opened it and read:

"The phenomena of dreams are yet too little studied to enable us to attest much certainty regarding them. The popular belief has frequently ascribed them to supernatural agency; especially where there has been any coincidence between a dream and an external event; and it may be said that if many instances of remarkable dreams may be explained by natural causes, there are others so well authenticated that we can not altogether discredit them that are manifestly unexplained by any scientific theory."

## CHAPTER XVI

Though it was scarcely six o'clock when Morven awoke the following morning, and the lazy winter sun was casting its first light over the earth, the sound of heavy pick thuds greeted his ears; for Peck was already outside, tearing into the bosom of the mountain with a vengeance. The thirst for gold was in the Westerner's throat—not that he craved the metal for its inherent worth. He merely wanted it for the excitement of getting it. So he flung himself into the work of uncovering Coonee Latee's treasure without any thought of sharing it. It was sort of a pious inspiration that goaded him into helping the little princess out of her spirit-worry.

Morven slipped into his robe, went over to a rear window and looked out. Peck had

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

started the excavation about twenty feet back of the house, and was making it of unnecessary dimensions, Morven thought. Sinking a ten by twenty shaft for no telling how many feet seemed no one man job; for already Peck had voiced his intention of doing it alone. Morven smiled out at him.

"I may be able to help you in another week," he offered. "I am getting stronger every minute now."

Peck straightened himself up from his work, a peculiar smile lighting his face. "And I wouldn't be surprised if I didn't need help by then," he replied. "But I'll need *real* help; not a sick man's. How about Jim Givings? Do you think he'd come over?"

"Yes; and I know of several other men I can get for you."

Peck's face wore a peculiar expression. "Yes; and those others would wag it all over the community that we've gone crazy. Jim Givings won't talk—I know him. And he's

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

the only one I am willing to take into confidence."

Morven laughed. "Even when a man is foolish he doesn't like to be called so."

Peck slung the pick downward with a renewed energy. "Time will tell who's foolish around here," he grunted.

Time did. For at the end of ten days Peck and Jim had reached a depth of twenty feet, and both of them were about to give it up as hopeless. Morven, who was now able to go to Yellow Gold every day and attend to business over there, was very serious over the matter, as he stood at the top of the pit early one morning.

"If you just won't give up," he offered, "I'll help you with the digging today."

Peck shot him a surprised look upward. "You don't mean to say you are interested?"

"I believe you're on the right track," was the calm reply.

Then the unexpected thing happened: Jim

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Givings' pick struck through a piece of rotted buckskin, and, as he pulled it out of the ground, it uncovered itself from around a little earthen jug, such as the Indians once used for brewing sassafras tea.

"Well, what do you think of that?" drawled Jim. "How come that thing away down here, you reckon?"

Peck shrugged. "Why the Indians put it here—who do you reckon did? And I'll tell you right now that the finding of that little pot at this depth proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the gold is farther down this shaft."

He climbed out of the pit and handed Morven the jar for closer inspection. And Morven's face grew pale as he looked at it; a solemn, sacred silence filled him. The face of an Indian chief was raised in relief on its front, and Morven felt instinctively that it was a picture of his grandfather. Then he was sure of it when he read what was carved below the picture.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"I am the chief who protects all that belongs to my people."

As Morven translated the words in a slow, solemn voice, Peck and Jim watched him reverently, feeling for the first time since they had known him the intensity of the Indian within him. And though his lips quivered as he read it aloud a second time, his splendid dark eyes looked straight into Peck's as he said:

"You were right, Peck. The big vein of Cherokee is somewhere down this shaft."

"Of course it is," replied Peck. "I've same as got it."

For a moment Morven was silent. He had drawn a piece of paper from inside the jug and was reading it to himself. Finally he began reading out loud:

"Gold is the pale face's yellow sin—it comes from near the heart of their hell and has the color of that place's fire.

"The pale face's Bible says: 'The idol of the beathen are silver and gold, the work of men's

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

hands.' Indian thinks all pale faces must be heathens, then.

"Gold is as loquacious as ignorance itself. It was the voice of gold and the loud talking of its foolish copper-faced spenders that caused the pale face to learn of our mines, to covert them.

"But here is joke: Pale face not get our gold. We, the nation of Cherokee, leave it in care of the Great Spirit, to hold until it can be delivered into the hands of our children, or our children's children."

As Morven finished reading, Peck said in a low, solemn voice:

"I guess Jim and I will need your help, Morven. We can't uncover that yellow sin any too quick for me."

Morven smiled and began tearing off his coat. In another moment he was down in the pit digging as furiously as the other two.

The shaft grew deeper, deeper, until at the end of another week it had reached a depth of

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

forty feet, and still no gold. And though Peck and Morven did not lose hope, Jim Givings did.

"It's my own particular opinion that we are wasting time," he announced one day, as he straightened up from his work and wiped the beads from his forehead.

"Oh, we'll come to it after a while," comforted Peck, smiling.

Jim grunted. "I reckon we will when we've punched through the floor of that savings bank in China."

Morven and Peck laughed. To them the earthen pot was a constant reminder that gold was somewhere in the heart of the mountain, and they felt sure they were on the right trail. And so they worked on courageously, never wavering in their determination to find it even if it took a year.

"I reckon the chief knew what he was a-talk-in' about when he said the gold lay close to brimstone. Seems to me we're far enough

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

down to feel the heat of brimstone now," complained Jim.

The weeks grew into months, and the first fringy green of spring was casting soft shadows and pungent odors over the mountains, and the shaft was fifty feet deep, when one day Morven, working down there alone, sent up just one solemn, thrilling, often repeated, but always fascinating word to the two men above: "Gold!"

That was all. It had been voiced without the least show of excitement, for Morven's tones were calm and low, as though the discovery of gold was an everyday occurrence with him. Peck and Jim felt little goose bumps rising along their necks, their hearts thumped terribly.

"Did you say gold?" Peck thundered down the shaft.

A strange, oppressive silence was the only answer. For instead of being hilarious over the matter, Morven was standing down there hold-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

ing a huge lump of gold in his hand, with a sad expression on his face, mental-visioning the day his ancestors left their homes. He saw them as they stood with mournful eyes gazing across the valley of fading hopes. He saw the long caravan winding its way along the old mountain road. He saw the lonely figure of the little princess as, proud and stately, she stood and watched after them. He saw Archie Morven come forward and clasp her in his arms, and now a strange gladness was on her brow her dark eyes melted happily. He looked down at the vein of shining gold, and the still shadow of his dreams folded him closer in its sway. For now the little princess, with the low sweet sigh of a sleeping child, smiled at him and said: "You, my beautiful grandson, have found the gold that belongs to your grandmother's people, and now Coonee Latee can sing and play along the forest streams of Great Forever, for at last happiness has filled her soul." Then he heard the music of her song

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

as she glided through the glow-worm-lighted forest and disappeared.

"Say, down there," hurled Peck, "did we understand you to say you'd found gold?"

Then Jim Givings grinned over the edge of the pit: "Did youn's say something about finding something?"

Morven started from his dreaming and looked up. "Yes; I said it, and it's here. Come on down and see for yourselves."

They went. They saw.

Peck made a thorough examination of the vein and found it to be ten feet thick, which was by far the largest one that had ever been opened up by a white man in that part of the country. All three of them removed some large stones that lay against the inner wall of the pit, and now it was Peck's turn to cry out:

"It's the opening of a drift," he explained, gazing into the dark little passage. "Great Swords! No wonder the savages hated to leave this mine, for they had only begun working it.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

This is the only drift they made as it runs along the lowest level of the vein, and though they must have gotten lots of gold out of the mine, the greater part of it is untouched. Morven, it won't be long before you're one of the richest men in the country."

Morven smiled sadly. "I have no idea of keeping all the gold," he announced solemnly. "I will send the better part of it to its rightful owners—a tribe of Indians living in Oklahoma. I am entitled to only one third—my grandmother's share."

Peck laughed. "Well, I don't reckon you'll go hungry if you merely keep one third," he said.

## CHAPTER XVII

Summer, with its soft flower-scented breezes and pleasant warmth snuggled over the mountains, bringing memories to Morven of the girl he had met on the highway a year ago, and, having no time for such idle dreams, he made a desperate effort to shove them aside. He was too busy to encourage them now, for he must keep to his purpose of gold mining until his grandmother's people had received their full share of the treasure. Somehow, he felt very closely related to those red men lately—the gold was the bond that held them together. And the closer he felt to the Indians, the farther away Bevill seemed to get. He was too much an Indian to ever approach her again with his love. His great-grandfather's picture looked down on him from the jug on the man-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

tel, a constant reminder of the copper blood flowing in his veins. And as he eyed that rugouse old countenance he smiled sadly. In his most visionary moments he could not picture a dainty, flowerlike girl like Bevill pointing out that old warrior to her children as their ancestor. No; it was all out of the question now—the thought of some day winning her. The moving picture Col. Brock had treated to had solved the problem—white blood and copper were never intended to mingle.

It was while he was in this frame of mind that he wrote to Bevill, advising her of finding the gold, thanking her again for telling him of her dreams, for had he not received her letter the secret of Cherokee must have remained buried in the heart of Fox Mountain through all the ages to come, and poor little Coonee Latee would have gone on through eternity grieving over it. He told Bevill of the large mill house he had built at the mine, of the vast amount of gold they were getting out of the

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

shaft, of the excitement it was causing throughout the country. Miners from all parts of the globe were flocking back to America's first gold field, which had been quite overlooked since the discovery of gold in California and Alaska, though several mines had paid in a small way during the past ten years, in spite of primitive operations. His letter was full of interesting disclosures—full of everything but sentiment. That was conspicuously missing. It was just a polite, friendly, well-composed letter; that was all.

And when the girl in the city so far away read it, a quick, snatchy little pain clutched at her heart for a moment, a sudden tear dropped from her eyes into the mist of pink chiffon that trailed her white shoulders, and she heaved a sigh that flowed up from her very soul. **Last** summer's outdoor days floated before her vision, the cool, dewy, wild-flower fragrance of them calling her back to them once again. Nature's wild paths were drawing her as quick-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

silver draws gold, but she knew it was out of the question for her to go where Morven was—she could never place herself in the path of a man who was an Indian, besides, his letter did not sound as if he wanted her now. To all appearances he was glad she had not accepted him. She could never go to the mountains again while he was there. Perhaps he was already interested in another. Suddenly those alluring little wood-trails seemed to be a chaos of despair-filled ruts and gulleys. They were not smooth pathways of love for her to tread again.

A letter from Becky Smith came to her at the end of the month causing her to change her mind about going up. It read:

“Dear Miss Bevill—

I reckon what I've got to tell you will be a shocking surprise to you— I'm going to marry Mr. Peck, the gentleman what's managin' Mr. Morven's mine— and I'm writing especially to ask you to come up to

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

my wedding because I won't feel like gettin' married without you are here—you have been so mighty good to me and ma. And ma says to tell you that she made up the material you sent. She made it up into wedding clothes, an' they are prettie as any you ever seed.

"I am going to be married in the New school house that Mr. Morven built down our end of the county. It is such a prettie little building—I want you to see it. I reckon you've heard about the schools Mr. Morven's been a-building over the county at his own expense. He's put up several of 'em, here and there, for he says it's the only way to do in the mountains—the only way to reach all the children. He don't believe in puttin' so much money in just one school which is usually too far away to do most of the children any good. So he's setting his'n right smack dab in the woods and is aimin' to put a good teacher in every

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

one of 'em. Ma says he's exactly if not altogether right about it. She says I'd a got a better learnin' if my school had been closer. For I couldn't go hiking off to a school five miles away every day, and leave ma here to do all the hard work. If it had been nearer, I could have milked the cows afore going.

"I reckon you know where Mr. Morven's gitting the money to do so much good with. He's getting it from that mine, though he ain't keeping all he gits for his own use—he's sending piles of it out West somewheres. I heard he's sending it to Indians. Kinfolks, I reckon.

"While I'm on the subject of Mr. Morven, ma says for me to tell you she firmly believes his pa shot mine in self defense because pa shore did threaten to kill him that morning afore he left home. And, while I ain't ever owned it before, pa was fond of corn liquor, and was more moon-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

shiny than sunshiny when he got tanked. And he was tanked when he left home that morning because ma said so. I don't mean no harm against my father, but I feel like I must tell you this to clear Mr. Morven. He deserves it for the good he's done the folks in this county. Ma says we Smiths owe it to him. So I have done my part. I reckon you think I'm talking a heap about Mr. Morven. Well, maybe it's because I'm so upset that he won't be here to join in my wedding feast. He's going to be in Oklahoma then—is leaving today, to be gone several weeks, and therefore can't possibly be present to help send me and Mr. Peck on the way to happiness. Mr. Morven says he feels the weight of his Indian blood right smart of late—says he don't reckon he'll ever marry a white woman now. And I don't reckon he'd marry a Indian do you. Well, you can't always dictate to cupid, Ma says. He

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

might meet a prettie squaw out west that he'll fancy. And he goes west mighty often of late. Maybe he's already met a little girl that looks like his grandma did. Ma says his grandma was as prettie as flowers, with a voice like love—kinder low and catchy.

"The wedding is just two weeks off, and I shore do want you, and my heart won't be easy until you write and say what train I must meet. Mr. Morven left his auto in care of Mr. Peck, and him and me'll meet you and scoot you home in no time.

"You'll be pleased with the music Pamelie and Halleluiahs going to play at the wedding—they learned it off of Mr. Morven's phonograph.

"I haven't told you that I broke off my engagement with Lemme Bane, but I reckon it's not necessary. Well, I kinder found out that fate mauled him a lick the day he was born that he ain't got over yet

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

—a mean disposition. And I kinder lost my faith in him when I found it out. My love couldn't live without faith and trust. Take the light from the day and what you got? Nothin but a night of despair. And so I don't reckon you'll blame me for turning him down for a good man I can trust.

"Well, I don't reckon I'll keep you any longer, yet and still, I'd like to write all night. Please let me know the train to meet. Ma sends lots of love.

Your happy Becky Smith."

Bevill read the letter over and over again, and it was with a mighty effort she controlled the tremor in her voice as she gave the maid orders to pack her trunk. For she had suddenly decided to take advantage of Morven's absence and visit the mountains again. While he was away off there in Oklahoma making love to some little Indian princess, she would go to the mountains and help Becky with her wedding arrangements.

## CHAPTER XVIII

It was the day before Becky's wedding, and Bevill, assisted by Pamelie and Halleluiah, was busy decorating the new school house for the wedding that was to take place at noon the following day. They zigzagged wild smilax from the center ceiling to the side walls down the entire length of the room; they planted clusters of laurel flowers in little jugs of water, hiding the jugs with more smilax; they hung pine branches in corners; and they made a wedding bell of a frame of wire netting covered with wild magnolia leaves and blossoms. The whole scheme of decoration wore a very civilized appearance, thanks to Bevill, and the girls were all well pleased with their work when it was at last completed.

"Isn't it beautiful!" exclaimed Bevill, taking

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

in the effect from the rear of the building. "I wouldn't mind getting married under that bell myself."

The other girls looked at her. A weary, wistful pathos filled her eyes as she gazed at the bell hanging above the flower-burdened altar, a pathos that was strangely becoming to her pretty face. What a beautiful bride she would make, with her soft wavy hair mingling among the tulle of a bridal veil, her slender white hand trembling on the arm of her groom as she walked down the aisle, his wife. Pamelie and Halleluiah could not picture a more beautiful bride than she would make, for they saw not only her pretty, sweet face, but her childish purity of soul, and their admiration came from the depths of their hearts. To them, Bevill was just a beehive brand of sweetness, with a heart as impressionable as honeycomb, and as full of good. Pamelie was the first to speak:

"And I wouldn't mind getting married under

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

it either, especially tomorrow after we've fastened fresh flowers in it."

Halleluiah was thoughtful. "Jim'll have to start powerful early in the morning ef he wants to get those laurel flowers down nigh the falls and be back in time to dyke himself for the wedding," she said.

The sun was far over in the western sky when they at last closed the door, locked it and started home. Bevill insisted on walking some of the way with the other two, and the sun was snuggling down behind the ridge across the chasm when she said goodby to them on that part of the highway where she had first met Morven, and as the girls passed out of sight down the road, she could not resist the desire to climb upon the cliff that overlooked the falls. She caught her breath as she stood up there looking out over the enchanting scene. The chasm seemed deeper than ever, larger. The river was more turbulent. She felt a mere

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

nothing against all that greatness of nature, a poor, pitiful little nothing.

She dropped down on the same rock she had sat on that other day, and naturally memories of Morven began to whirl upon her. Why, it was right here in this very spot that he had held her in his arms, kissed her. She smiled, and her face colored hotly. How far away was the day of that kiss, how completely out of her life was the man who had taken it unawares, how many, many changes had come to him. He had been elected senator, had visited the city without letting her know, had discovered vast wealth on his land, and was even now out West making love to some little Indian maid. Her face shadowed a trifle. Fortune had favored him in spite of his Indian blood; for the people of his county had not allowed it to stand in the way of the highest office they had to offer him — evidently his mixed blood made no difference with them when they were looking for a man to repre-

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

sent them. She smiled as she recalled what her guardian had told her about Morven's grandfather—what a fine man he was. None but a well-bred little Indian girl could have won the love of such a man as Archie Morven.

Bevill was so deeply absorbed in her thoughts that she paid no attention to the ever deepening twilight. She just sat there gazing across the chasm to the mountains beyond, enjoying their dusky beauty as she dreamed. The water of the falls sounded far away like the humming of bees, summer's wild-sweet perfume filled the air, all nature seemed in harmony with the soft memories that stirred her soul. A blue jay's song drowned the music of the falls for a moment, only to make the water's voice sound louder than ever when the bird's song had ceased. A smile flickered around the girl's mouth as she recalled the poem Morven had read to her that day:

"The voice in the waterfall is calling . . ."

But she smiled at the idea of a man hurrying

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

himself into the Great Forever for a mere heartache. That poor Indian of the long ago might have allowed his love to torture him into doing such a thing, but men of the present day did not love that way.

The gravel of the highway below made a noise under an automobile's rubbered step, but the dreaming girl did not hear. It was only when the car pulled to a standstill in the dugout below that she seemed to notice it. And then she crept to the edge of the precipice and glanced down, just as she had glanced that other day, and when she saw who the occupant was, her heart gave a sudden lunge that came near throwing her over the cliff. She could not control the gasping little cry that escaped her. For the man sitting down there was Morven, Morven whom she had thought was so far away!

He heard her cry, started, and looked up into her eyes. Then, in a little while, he had scaled the hillside to where she stood, a pretty, grace-

## **THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED**

ful figure in the gloom.

"Is it really you?" he breathed, a trembling note in his low voice.

For a moment she could not answer him. Dazed, her heart wedging her throat against words, she just stood there and looked at him. He came a little closer and took her hand.

## CHAPTER XIX

"Why, I don't believe you are glad to see me," he reproached.

She smiled. "Yes, I am glad, though somewhat surprised."

Her hand trembled in his. He held it warmly.

"You should have known I would come the moment I learned you were here," he said.

She gave him a quick, surprised glance.

"Who told you I was here?"

"Halleluiah."

A shadow flouted across her face. "So it was Halleluiah who betrayed me?"

A slight smile drew his lips. "If advising me of your presence in the mountains was betrayal, then I fear Halleluiah is guilty."

She sensed the hurt in his voice, and a queer pain began to tug at her heart.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"I feel flattered to know you came back on my account," she said sweetly.

He tried to read her eyes, but she was looking off to where the moon was nosing its way above the eastern horizon.

"I wanted to see you, in spite of the way you treated me," he admitted.

She said nothing else for some moments, neither did she make an effort to draw away her hand. He smiled. He thought he understood her silence, and said in a low voice:

"I know it is wrong for me to hope in spite of the way you ran away from me the moment you found out I was part Indian, for I am as much Indian now as I was then, but the moment I read Halleluiah's letter, I began to argue with myself that you would not have returned to the mountains had memories of last summer been altogether unpleasant to you."

Her eyes turned upon him. "Becky wrote

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

me you would be away all summer," she reminded him in a weak little voice.

He winced and let go her hand. "I made up my mind never to approach you with my love again," he continued in a low, pleading voice. "And I am still determined not to try to persuade you, for I know the world says I am not your equal."

Her brows lifted. "Judging from what my guardian says of your grandfather, Archie Morven, none could be of higher degree than he. Just recently I learned he was a close friend of my guardians grandfather."

"Yes; I know, but according to the world Archie made a mistake when he married my grandmother, and I don't propose to urge my Indian blood on you. It is merely to comfort myself that I want you to know how much I have loved you since I first saw you. I have thought of no other woman since then."

He went closer and caught her hand once again. "You must forgive me for saying it,

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

but I loved you then, love you now, and shall go on loving you through the rest of my life," he said in an unsteady voice. "After you left me that day, I seemed to hear the voice of the waterfall calling me down to the very brink of eternity, but before I took the desperate plunge, another voice, deeper, louder, summoned me back to the task of living. It was the voice of God telling me that death is a sentence imposed on man the instant he is born, and that God alone must name the hour for that sentence to be fulfilled. And so I shrank away from the water's edge, ashamed of the weakness that had come over me."

Sorrow had come into her eyes. "Did it hurt that much?" she asked in a low voice.

He smiled sadly. "It hurt more than a woman who has never loved could ever guess," he answered in a voice full of passionate suffering. "At first I felt very hard towards you for leaving me as you did—without one word, but I changed when I learned your reason for

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

going, for I realized how impossible it was for you to love a mixed breed, especially one whose father you believed to be guilty of murder. And while I had not felt the weight of my Indian blood before I met you, I feel all Indian now, since by my many visits to Oklahoma, for there are many people out there who remember my grandmother. Some were mere boys and girls when they left the old home, some were grown men and women. And if you could see those copper-colored folks sobbing over the man who is restoring their long lost treasure to them you would realize that a man's grandmother is very close kin, that if she was an Indian, he is one, even though his hair be curly like a woman's, and his face white."

A sad smile flowed up from her heart. "I should think you would be very proud of your grandmother's memory," she said softly.

He looked at her eagerly, his hand tightening on hers.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

"Do you mean you would be proud to claim an Indian woman for a grandmother?"

There was something solemn in his voice, as he asked the question, that awed her, filled her with a new fear of him. His great, big magnetism dominated her completely, just seemed to draw her very heart out of her throbbing bosom.

"Yes," she repeated, "I'd be very proud to claim her."

His face paled in the dim light.

"You don't know what you are saying," he warned in a hoarse voice. "You are encouraging me to hope I may some day win your love—may some day ask you to share the name of—an Indian."

A hot little streak of pain cut its way through her heart.

"You have no right to think I trifled with your love that other day we stood up here," she reproached in a low, tremulous voice. "I loved you that day I was here on the cliff with

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

you, or I never would have permitted you to—  
act as you did.”

He gazed at her. Ashamed of himself for voicing his old doubt of her, he stepped closer to her and caught her in his arms and held her tight against the terrible throbbing of his heart.

“What a rough old Indian I am to hurt you,” he breathed into her hair. “Will you ever forgive me?”

Though she was silent, she made no attempt to move away from him—just stayed there, trembling, happy, in his clasp, the great love in her heart beating its way up to her eyes, where it lay like pools of summer rain in morning glory cups.

“I want you to be sure of yourself,” he said, after awhile.

She pulled herself free of him, and looked out across the chasm. Then, in a little while, she sought his eyes again, his dark, magic eyes. “I am sure of only one thing,” she said.

“And that?” His voice was jerky.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

She looked down. "Is that I love you!"

He drew her into his arms again and covered her brow with kisses — her cheeks, her lips. And as he felt the warm response of her kiss, he knew he had at last passed from the wood-shadows of despair to the sun-clad hill-top of love.

"And when are we to be married?" he asked some moments later. "I am afraid to leave that question unsettled a second time."

She hesitated a while. Then she told him she thought sometime next fall would be a good time. But he would not agree to that. He could not wait that long. He was still afraid of something—he knew not what. No; he could not consent to put it off another week. Why could they not be married tomorrow, while the minister was in the mountains to perform Becky's ceremony?

A blush brushed her cheek, her eyes filled with a wonderful light, as she visioned herself standing under that lovely wedding bell, with

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

him beside her. Oh, it was too much for her!

"All right—tomorrow," she consented, closing her eyes as his lips pressed hers again. "I suppose that will be as good time as any."

"I think Halleluiah will be pleased," he said after a few moments.

She looked up quickly.

"I wonder what Halleluiah wrote you?"

He drew a letter from his pocket.

"I'll let you see, if you promise not to tell," he offered, taking a small electric lantern from another pocket and pressing a button for her to read.

She smiled as she took the letter and opened it carefully.

"My dear Mr. Morven—I have some excitin news for you. Miss Bevill Brown is here in the mountains for a visit to the Smiths. Came for Beckys wedding. And when I took her down the chasm trail one day to see how prettie an cozylike yo hed fixed up your grandparents ole home she mighty night took a fit over hit.

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

Sed it was the most adoarable spot she hed ever seen an that she'd shore love to live there an listen to that water fall the rest of her living life. Sed it sounded like the lully-buy her mother used to sing her afore she went to sleep. That gushing water seemed to please her mighty. I tole her you mout consent to rent her the little room you added off to the river side, and then she blushed worse'n the western sky when the sun's a-kissin hit goodnight. And when I took her inside that room an showed her the prettie white ferniture and the flowered curtains and pillows around, she sighed a lonely soundin sigh and went over to the window and threw ope the shutters and gazed down at the falls. I knew the blood in her heart was troublin her for some reason, so I left her and went in to help Mrs. Crill fix lunch, and when I got back to call Miss Bevill to eat, I caught her a kissin that beaded head band you gave her here while back. And I reckon my step must have been softer'n a

## THE MOCKING BIRD'S BREED

hound hunted rabbits, for she didn't seem to hear me till I got clean on her and then she seemed powerful shy over it. So I thought I'd write and ax you to come home an offer to rent her that river room as she's been a powerful blessin to some of us fokes around here. Your friend Halleluiah Givings."

When Bevill finished reading, Morven looked down into her eyes:

"So I came home to offer you the use of the Mocking Bird's little nest."

She smiled softly.

"Isn't Halleluiah a sweet thing?" she trembled under his kiss.

And Cupid, gun-tired and battle-worn from the desperate fight he had made, drew a deep sigh of relief, and crept within the shadow of the trees.









**THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT**

---

**This book is under no circumstances to be  
taken from the Building**

---



